DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 212 551 SO 013 902

TITLE	Proceedings of an African Symposium on the World of Work and the Protection of the Child (Yaounde, Cameroon, Africa, December 12-15, 1979.)
INSTITUTION	International Inst. for Labour Studies, Geneva (Switzerland).
REPORT NO	ISBN-92-9014-170-0
PUB DATE	81
NOTE	139p.
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Career Education; Child Abuse; *Child Labor; Child Neglect; *Child Welfare; Employed Parents; Employment; Futures (of Society)
IDENTIFIERS	*Africa

ABSTRACT

This publication contains the working papers from a symposium in which Africans active in the field of child welfare and protection discussed the conditions under which children are raised and the impact that this has on their future labor force participation. While this symposium was limited to the African context, it is hoped that it will mark the commencement of a longer-term research and educational program on issues of special relevance to children everywhere. The four themes considered by the participants at the symposium were: (1) workers of the future: career guidance for children and the problems of child labor; (2) the protection of children from violence, abuse, bodily harm and neglect; (3) the role of nongovernmental organizations in child protection; and (4) measures for the protection and care of children whose parents are employed outside the home. In addition to the six working papers prepared on these themes, the publication also contains the framework paper and the report of the discussions. Recommendations are included. (Author/RM)

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THE WORLD OF WORK AND THE PROTECTION OF THE CHILD

Proceedings of an African symposium
on the world of work
and the protection of the child

Yaoundé, 12-15 December 1979

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ISBN 92-9014-170-0

First published 1981

Copies can be obtained direct from the International Institute for Labour Studies, P.O. Box 6, 1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland.

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FOREWORD

As its contribution to UN activities during International Children's Year, the International Institute for Labour Studies held an African Symposium on the World of Work and the Protection of the Child. Organised with the support of the OAU, the ECA, the UNDP and the Governments of the Kingdoms of Norway and the Netherlands, the Symposium took place in Yaoundé (12-15 December 1979) with the active co-operation of the Government of the United Republic of Cameroon. It was attended by over 50 participants from the government, trade union, employer and academic circles of a number of African countries. In addition, ten representatives of interested international organisations attended the Symposium as observers.

The over-all objective of the Symposium was to provide a forum in which Africans, active in the field of child welfare and protection, could discuss the conditions under which children are raised and the impact that this has on their future labour force participation.

The four themes considered by the participants at the Symposium were: (i) workers of the future: career guidance for children and the problems of child labour; (ii) the protection of children from violence, abuse, bodily harm and neglect; (iii) the role of non-governmental organisations in child protection; and (iv) measures for the protection and care of children whose parents are employed outside the home. The six working papers prepared for these themes are reproduced in this volume together with the framework paper and the report of the discussions.

While the present Symposium was limited to the African context, it is hoped that it will mark the commencement of a longer-term research and educational programme on issues of special relevance to children everywhere.

OPENING CEREMONY OF THE SYMPOSIUM

During the opening ceremony, presided over by H.E. Mr. Paul Dontsop, Minister of Labour of the United Republic of Cameroon and Chairman of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, three messages were addressed to the guests and participants.

Mr. Albert Tévoédjrè, Deputy Director-General of the International Labour Office and Director of the International Institute for Labour Studies, first thanked the United Republic of Cameroon for the kind hospitality it had shown in organising and hosting the Symposium. Because of its geographical position in the heart of Africa, the particular problems with which it was concerned, and the active interest which H.E. Mr. Amadou Ahidjo, President of the United Republic of Cameroon, had taken in the International Year of the Child, Cameroon was an ideal setting for the proceedings on "the world of work and protection of the child". Mr. Tévoédjrè expressed the gratitude of the International Institute for Labour Studies to the international organisations - the Organisation of African Unity and the United Nations Development Programme - and the bilateral parties - Netherlands and Norway - which had supported and funded the meeting. He was convinced that, small as it might be, this Symposium would, owing to the calibre of those attending it - representatives of the world of labour (workers and employers), governments, universities and research bodies - take a fresh and enlightened approach to the problems of vocational guidance and work for children, of protecting children against exploitation and maltreatment and of protecting those whose parents worked outside the home, and to the role of non-governmental organisations in programmes of benefit to children.

In concluding, Mr. Tévoédjrè stressed that the purpose of the Symposium was not merely to bring African experts together for the pleasure of meeting but rather to prompt them to single out research work and specific activities that could be carried out by the International Institute for Labour Studies as a follow-up to the Yaoundé Symposium.

Mr. Vautherin, Director of the ILO Regional Office for Africa at Yaoundé, read a message from Mr. Doo Kingué, UNDP Regional Director for Africa.

Mr. Doo Kingué regretted that he had been unable at the last minute to attend the proceedings. Referring to the Monrovia Symposium held in February 1979 on "What kird of Africa by the year 2000?", he pointed out that this question made one ask in turn what measures should be taken to protect children against premature introduction into the world of work while ensuring their right to education and developing in them a sense of initiative and effort. He felt sure that the Symposium would find suitable answers to these questions.

OPENING SPEECH

by H.E. Mr. Paul Dontsop,
Minister of Labour of the United Republic of Cameroon

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First may I bid you, on behalf of the President of the United Republic of Cameroon, the Government and the Cameroonian people, a warm and fraternal welcome and a happy and fruitful stay in Yaoundé.

May I also express our gratitude to the International Institute for Labour Studies (Geneva), the United Nations Development Programme and the Governments of the Kingdoms of Norway and the Netherlands who, by taking the successful initiative of organising and supporting this Symposium, have made the activities of the International Year of the Child in Africa a resounding success measuring up to the hopes which our countries (although faced with the serious problems of underdevelopment), have placed in the young people of our continent.

By accepting to host this Symposium the Cameroon Government intends once again to affirm its constant determination to encourage and support, in all places and at all times, all initiatives likely to strengthen the unity and solidarity of African countries and to promote among them rewarding and fruitful exchanges of experience on the complex problems encountered by society today.

The themes chosen for reflection and discussion during the Symposium are present-day problems which are made more complex by the level of the economic, social and cultural development of our young States.

In fact, while the policy of our country to make our children the main agents and primary beneficiaries of our development drive is very evident, no one can, however, underestimate certain difficulties relating to the economic, demographic, sociological and educational situation peculiar to our continent. Notwithstanding such difficulties, our States are resolutely committed to promoting, through appropriate training, educational and protective activities, the conscious and enthusiastic participation of the young people of our continent in the economic and social development of our young States.

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In this light, we, like the ILO, are convinced that the harmonious and rapid development of our countries and the satisfaction of the essential needs of their peoples depend, to a large extent, on the efforts we shall make in order to provide our children with education and an appropriate training so that their lives as adults should not be disturbed by the effects of a very early and unprepared insertion into national production networks.

It is also important, in order to preserve and make this precious capital - i.e. young people - profitable, to provide for suitable laws and regulations to progressively abolish or control and make the work of children more humane. These measures to protect and determine the spheres in which children should participate in active life are not called for only on emotional or humanitarian grounds. They also aim at protecting children from working conditions which retard their physical, intellectual and mental development.

It still remains however that, taking into account the specific nature of our social and economic environment and the ways and customs of our countries, we should be realistic and flexible in setting national standards and implementing international instruments relating to the protection of the child against evil practices in the world of work.

In fact, the problem of determining the minimum working age of children is closely linked to that of compulsory education which in turn depends on the existing or potential structures for training and education. It is obvious that the development of school infrastructures and the training of skilled staff to operate them is not yet possible with the limited funds of the developing countries we represent here. Furthermore, the defects in the functioning of the vital registration services in certain countries would make it difficult to determine the minimum age of young people even should we have the funds necessary for compulsory education.

However, I think it would be wrong, given the difficulties I have just mentioned (difficulties which are much more situational than structural), to think that nothing positive has been done to date to protect our children from the evil effects of an early entry into professional life.

In fact, as is already the case with our customs, the tasks necessary for the survival of the community are distributed according to sex and age. That is why children are strictly forbidden to perform certain duties and why before participating in the active life of the community, the child has to be prepared by initiation rites. The modern society is necessarily a society governed by written laws and its tendency to free itself of taboos and prohibitions should not be condemned.

That is why such instruments to protect the child are supplemented by the provisions of the Civil, Penal and Labour Codes and the Conventions and Recommendations of the ILO. We took an active part in the drafting of these Conventions and Recommendations.

But beyond the improvement of national and international standards which, it should be emphasised, are not always easy to implement considering our limited resources and the stage of development of our societies, it is important not to be satisfied with mere declarations of intention but to define essential and concrete actions to be taken to enable our children to lead a life commensurate with the love we have for them and the hope we have placed in them.

In this context, I am convinced that it is by doubling our efforts to promote the economic, social and cultural development of our countries that we shall have the resources which will enable us to satisfy our aspirations for the progress, happiness and dignity of our children.

I leave it to my country's delegates to the Symposium to explain to you Cameroon's experiment with regard to the protection of the child, an example which, without claiming to be a model, is an interesting topic for discussion on account of its originality. In addition to being an original example, it is also a faithful demonstration of the political philosophy and humanism of President Ahmadou Ahidjo for whom (and I quote) "in short, every policy and moral is founded only on what they think of man and his destiny".

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, while wishing you every success in your work, I declare open the Symposium organised by the International Institute for Labour Studies, Geneva, on the World of Work and the Protection of the Child.

MESSAGE

by Mr. Michel Doo Kingué,
UNDP Regional Director for Africa

I am deeply sorry that, owing to certain developments affecting my duties, I cannot now leave New York as I had intended, to participate in the important Symposium you are holding in Yaoundé on the theme: "The World of Work and the Protection of the Child".

At a time when all the attention of planners is geared towards the year 2000, I would like to point out, as I did at the Symposium convened in Monrovia by the OAU in February 1979, that the advent of a new Africa which might be called our ideal Africa, depends more than ever before on a next generation of adults. Such a generation corresponds to the children of today, that is to say, to those who will be 20-30 years of age by the year 2000. Moreover, the present day adults should carefully prepare such future adults to fully assume their responsibilities in the twenty-first century.

Two ideas spring up immediately in my mind when I think of the theme that has brought you together in my dear country.

What type of world of work are we preparing for?

How can we take care of our children so that they do not encounter difficulties in this world?

Such important questions require detailed answers which cannot be easily given in a message as short as this.

I need only mention, with respect to the world of work, that we must do all we can to make it as human as possible so that it becomes a world of men and not one of robots or submen. This is undoubtedly the first step to be taken in order to protect children from the effects of such a world.

Of course, this does not mean that working conditions should exclude mechanisation. We have entered, whether we like it or not, the era of the machine, a tool which increases our working capacity and also protects us from the dangers encountered in carrying out certain work. At present, a growing number of factories function in the

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United States and Japan operated by increasingly developed robots. It is probable that in the year 2000, industry will, to a large extent, be automised. On the whole, the machine may further free man from certain constraints. The main thing, therefore, is that man himself should not become a robot in doing his work. And that is possible.

Work must no longer be a curse but should become for man a pleasant way of asserting himself. Every worker must therefore be treated as a human being and not as a robot or subman. Laws and regulations should provide for such condition.

With regard to protection of the child, it could take several forms.

Above all, it is important to avoid the premature insertion of the child into the world of work. Every child has the right to education and should fully enjoy such a right. However, we know that in reality such is not the case. In proof thereof we need only note the rate of illiteracy in the various parts of the world.

We must also endeavour to entrust work to children only after having adequately prepared them to do it competently and without much difficulty. Let us not ask our children to do work suited to adults. And if the child is obliged to work, his working hours and conditions should be arranged with due regard for his fragility.

In short, it is essential to develop the child's desire to make an effort rather than making him hate work because without work human beings can do nothing.

One of the greatest dangers threatening our societies is the triumph of laziness, the deep-rooted feelings in our fellow countrymen that everything is their due without their having any obligations in return. Such a danger, which is becoming increasingly evident among young people, should be avoided.

I am convinced that the eminent experts convened for your Symposium will be able to reflect on the theme chosen for this meeting and will find more appropriate solutions to the problems raised by the theme.

It is with this conviction that I hope your proceedings will be fruitful and your conclusions very useful.

FRAMEWORK PAPER

by Jacqueline Ki-Zerbo,
Consultant to international organisations
for women's problems
and Rapporteur of the Symposium

Introduction

Childhood is, by definition, a carefree, innocent world of games and freedom as opposed to the productive world of work. In leaving this lost paradise of childhood, man penetrates into a world of physical and intellectual effort in which he is condemned to toil "by sweat of his brow" to earn his daily bread.

In fact, this opposition is only apparent as play does not exclude work and the one without the other leads either to boring idleness or to exhausting strain. The link between work and play is particularly marked in Africa where numerous types of work are done in an atmosphere of joy and feasting.

If we take the African child in particular, daily observation shows that in his education there is no hard and fast dividing line between work and play. For socio-economic reasons, the child is introduced precociously into the world of work where he has to be protected taking into account the cultural traditions and the means at the disposal of his community.

Moreover, the respect of the rights of the child and his protection are mainly determined by the world of work to which his parents belong.

Africa, the continent of children and young people

Africa, historians say, was the cradle of humanity. What is certain is that it remains the continent of humanism in the literal sense, a continent in which priceless value is attached to man and, particularly, to the child. Across the continent, the climate and conditions of life vary from one region to another: the insalubrious air of the dense forest and the arid atmosphere of the desert regions are not always favourable to the survival of man. The lack of hospitality of nature, combined with

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the physical and economic aggressions suffered by the continent, have succeeded in emptying Africa of millions of its most able-bodied sons and in slowing down its march towards progress. But they have not succeeded in shattering its profound vitality, as the demographic situation of the continent shows today.

Given its vast area, Africa could hold within its border the whole of North America and Europe combined.

In 1975, its total population amounted to only 401 million inhabitants as against 473 million in Europe, 237 million in North America and 2,256 million in Asia.

Certain other characteristics have to be taken into account to get a clearer understanding of the situation of the African continent.

Its immense size should not make us forget that the area of cultivable lands (land under cultivation or lying fallow, pastures and forests) in Africa south of the Sahara is about 1,400 million hectares. The area under cultivation does not exceed 12 per cent of cultivable area.[1]

If one can conclude from this that the reserves of cultivable lands in Africa are immense, the fact remains that 4/5 of the population live on 1/5 of the African continent, whereas 60 per cent of the territory holds less than 6 per cent of the population.

In many regions, the soil is poor and the means of production archaic and rudimentary, except for cash crops, the cultivation of which tends to spread at the expense of food crops.

The inevitable result is the scarcity and high prices of food products which severely hit both the urban and the rural populations. Hunger, an episodic phenomenon which was once so rare that stories of famine sometimes resembled legends, casts its shadow over the homesteads where the fire to warm the daily meal does not always burn. It is becoming increasingly frequent to hear peasants say: "In the old days, you could not sell bananas. There were too many around. There was enough for everybody. Today, we have to buy this basic food on the market and the prices are constantly rising."[2]

Hunger has become the source of discord between husband and wife and it is not infrequent for families to rescue sick daughters from the conjugal home to find that these young women, often pregnant, are suffering from hunger.

Such real-life experiences bear out the findings of development experts such as Adebayo Adedeji, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, who declared in Monrovia:[3] "If production does not increase by at least 3.5 to 4 per cent per year, undernourishment will become general, exports will fall and we shall not have any means to pay for import of foodstuffs."

Given this food situation and taking into account the ecological and economic factors already mentioned, it is not surprising that the average life expectancy in Africa is only 44 years as against 72 in Europe, 62 in South America and 56 in Asia.

Africa is, therefore, the continent where death takes the heaviest toll, as is shown by the mortality rate of 19.8 per thousand (as against 9 per thousand in North America, 14 per thousand in Asia, and 10 per thousand in Europe). It is also the continent where death strikes the largest number of children.

The causes of infant mortality are essentially malnutrition and undernourishment, bad hygienic conditions and lack of preventive measures and health care. The most gravely hit are children between 0 and 4 years of age and in particular infants between 0 and 12 months, among whom the death rate is 108 for every 1,000 live births in Africa, as against 41 in Asia and 24 in Europe. It should be noted, moreover, that the statistical data for Africa are both insufficient and unreliable as the administrative services lack resources for the regular collection of data.

As the fertility rate has not dropped and as birth[4] is for the African a way of getting even with death, the African continent has an average annual population growth rate of 2.7 per cent, the highest in the world, as compared with 0.6 per cent for Europe, 1.0 per cent for North America and 2.1 per cent for Asia in 1975.

At this rate, the population of Africa will double by the year 2000 to reach a figure of 813 million inhabitants.

The youthful character of the African population will be further accentuated as the number of children between 5 and 15 years of age will increase from 105 million in 1975 to 216 million, while the economically active population (15 to 65 years of age) will rise from 212 million to 437 million resulting in a heavy average dependency rate, as shown by table 1.

As economic development and, in particular, employment creation are not progressing at such a fast pace, the number of jobless is likely to increase. The unemployment rate in Africa already ranged between 6 and 10 per cent as compared with 3 to 4 per cent in the industrialised countries. It should be noted that unemployment in these countries is only residual and cyclic, whereas it is inherent to underdeveloped economies.

Table 1: Dependency rates (proportion of dependent persons)[1] by regions, 1970, 1985 and 2000

	1970	1985	2000
World	731.1	717.0	638.1
More developed regions	574.0	577.5	568.9
Less developed regions	808.4	771.4	659.2
East Asia	664.8	585.7	514.3
South Asia	860.2	830.5	653.3
Africa	871.3	922.8	861.6
West Africa	879.3	938.2	904.5
East Africa	871.7	925.2	903.7
Central Africa	814.9	896.9	907.0
North Africa	910.4	929.3	768.5
South Africa	783.7	857.5	818.6
Latin America	857.2	836.0	768.3

[1] The dependency rate is defined as the number of persons under 15 years of age plus those aged 65 and above, per 1,000 inhabitants in the 15 to 64 age group.

Source: Anna C. Lee: "L'accroissement démographique mondial", in Développement et civilisations (Paris), No. 47-48, 1972.

These considerations take us to the heart of the problem of the African child and its protection in the world of work into which it is introduced despite, and also because of, the underemployment and the unemployment which affect its education, its training and its access to employment.

The vocational guidance of children

In the traditional society, which is still that of the village, the family is the basic cell of production. If its various functions can be differentiated and graded, the principal production activities are the same for each family unit. Under the system of subsistence economy, each family produces its own cereals and vegetables, builds and maintains its hut, makes its own clothes, furniture and articles of daily use. From the village notable down to the lowliest peasant, everyone is essentially a cultivator in the rainy season, and something of a mason, weaver, gardener and artisan in the dry season, apart from certain crafts (those of wood, iron, leather and pottery) which are reserved for particular castes.

It is in the light of the existing socio-economic situation that the majority of the delegates from developing countries to the last conference of the International Bureau of Education stressed the advantages of the structure of the extended family as compared to that of the nuclear family, advantages amply demonstrated by the educational facilities of all kinds which these families provide for their children in a relaxed and secure atmosphere of mutual affection (the elders transmitting orally the cultural and literary traditions of the community to the young and initiating them in its social and religious values, developing their vocational skills and integrating them progressively into working life).

This general assessment was corroborated by Mr. Bonaventure Habimana, Minister of Justice, who declared in 1976:[5] "The father teaches the son to cultivate the land, raise cattle, defend himself and build his own house. He invites him to attend the various palavers in which he will be called upon later to participate ... The mother initiates her daughter into domestic work, and the maintenance of her future home. She brings her up to be a model wife and mother."

It is clear from the above that vocational guidance was automatic, the son exercising the profession of his father, the daughter having only the universal, and apparently eternal, vocation of wife and mother. Vocational training was given by the family as part of the global education of the child to ensure its smooth integration into society.

But is the traditional family, whether rural or urban, sufficiently stable to withstand the different economic and cultural pressures exercised on it? Is it capable of satisfactorily fulfilling its roles of protector, educator and trainer? What help does it need to become the reliable basic cell of a changing society?

One of the essential factors of change is undoubtedly the school which already competes with the family for the education of the child. It seems to offer the surest way of escape from the harsh labours of the land, giving access to professions chiefly found in the towns. The reluctance of the families to send their children to school, in the early days of colonisation, has now been transformed into an infatuation, into an urgent need, to satisfy which every family is ready to make the heaviest sacrifices. This new attitude is due to the fact that the colonial school fully achieved its aim, which was to ensure full employment and social success for the small number of students which it trained for the administration.

Dazzled by the success of the products of the colonial school under the colonial administration, the African governments decided, at the First Conference of Ministers of National Education held in Addis Ababa in 1961, that schooling should be general and free by 1980.

On the eve of this deadline and in this International Year of the Child, may one ask what has happened to the Addis Ababa decision?

No one ignores the large sums allocated to schooling in our countries where 25 per cent of the national budget barely permits school education to be given to 10 or 15 per cent of the children of school-going age.

But even in countries where the school attendance rate is higher than 52 per cent, which was the average rate for the continent in 1975, the neo-colonial schools are characterised by high rates of failure at examinations, high drop-out rates and extremely high costs. Table 2 demonstrates this.

Table 2: Number of students reaching the first four classes out of every 100 admitted to primary schools[1]

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
Africa (34 countries)	100	89	83	78
Latin America (24 countries)	100	71	64	56
Asia (27 countries)	100	78	70	62

[1] These figures have been arrived at on the basis of the promotion, failure and drop-out rates for 1975. They have been weighted to take into account the number of students in each country. As a result they give a much more accurate idea of the drop-out rate for each region.

Source: Gabriel Carron and Ta Ngoc Chau: Reduction of inequalities in the development of education (Paris, IIPE).

That was how, from around 1960, the African States began to realise that the school system inherited from the colonisers was unsuited to their needs.

The limited scope for flexibility in public expenditure, the bottlenecks in the admissions to secondary school, were a painful warning note which both the governments and the families refused to heed in their forward flight. The proliferation of private schools, "veritable another-chance schools" for those rejected by the official school system, did not solve the problem.

Various attempts to modify the school system, so as to make it an instrument of economic and social development, were made under different names and met with varying success. Ranging from the simple changes in the vocabulary (such as using the words *Kouakou*, *filao* and *savannah* instead of Peter, oak and meadow) to radical reform, and passing through the ruralisation of teaching, the search for the best formula for the new school system is continuing.

The different experiments in educational reform generally seek to establish a link between education and production. Their objective is to impart prevocational training concurrently with education, so as to guarantee the child's entry into the working world. As a rule, these attempts include efforts at vocational guidance which unfortunately often limits itself to simple educational guidance, that is, weeding out the unfit, guiding the less unsuitable to the so-called vocational training schools and the more intelligent to the various branches of general, technical or university education.

Educational guidance no doubt determines the future of the children as workers. In this respect, it constitutes an important element in vocational guidance which presupposes not only a knowledge of the aptitudes of the child but also, and above all, precise and up-to-date knowledge of the employment market and of the planning of human resources.

Ever since they opted for planned development, the African States draw up plans which seek to establish employment estimates and the resultant training needs.

But these efforts are handicapped by the fact that the plans are no more than lists of projects, finance for which is by no means assured, and that the manpower estimates are frequently limited to the modern wage-earning sector which only covers an infinitesimal part of the economically active population of the continent.

In the face of all these constraints and, particularly, the difficulty of adjusting the training of young persons to the estimated employment needs, would it not be advisable as Mr. Ambroise Songre suggests "to reason in terms of a job for every trained person rather than adopting the logic of training individuals strictly in keeping with the needs of the economy?"[6]

But how can one ensure training for everyone? Would it be possible to strengthen the links between education and production for the privileged recipients of a school education while at the same time extending to women and children the non-formal training given by integrated rural development technicians in the villages?

In additional to radical reform of the educational system, is it not time to devise projects and programmes which would permit everyone to have some permanent activity useful both to himself and to the society of which he is a member? In the absence of capital, could the capacity for work of the young be used to overcome problems of unemployment and underemployment by providing them with vocational training, however minimal it might be?

Do the vacancy notices and rare job offers announced by the national radio and the local press have any meaning in the face of these fundamental questions? In the absence of an answer, one begins to question the utility of creating vocational guidance services and the effectiveness of campaigns to convince parents that diplomas are not the key to happiness and that there are no "stupid" jobs.

Problems of juvenile employment

The child in the world of work

In the world of work, a child is anyone between 5 and 15 years of age. This corresponds roughly to the period of compulsory schooling and coincides with the minimum age for entry into employment in the majority of industrialised countries.

The school is, in fact, the principal factor preventing the premature entry into employment of the young. Where universal and free education does not exist, parents prefer their children to work rather than leave them to their own devices, exposed to all the dangers inherent in idleness.

It is estimated that, in 1970, there were more than 40 million child-workers, aged 14 and below, in the world. Over 90 per cent of these child-workers lived in the developing regions, that is 39,975,000 children or 4 per cent of all children in this age group. In the industrialised regions, there were 3,383,000 children in the economically active population or 1.1 per cent of that same age group.[7]

This is why the Director-General of the International Labour Office, in underlining the efforts of his Organisation to protect children from exploitation, declared: "Despite the efforts made by the ILO and by many countries which have laid down regulations on the minimum age for admission of children to employment and on the conditions of employment of children, child labour is still widespread and a disturbing problem in many parts of the world where poverty and tradition have precluded its elimination."[8]

It should be recalled in this connection that the industrialisation of Europe involved the exploitation of child labour, stigmatised in sociological novels and, in particular, by Charles Dickens, in gripping and unforgettable terms. The generalisation of compulsory schooling, the development of technology and the resultant contraction of the employment market greatly contributed to liberating children in the industrialised countries from the exhausting work schedules and harsh working conditions of the factories. But even in these countries child labour, and particularly the labour of immigrant children, continues to exist, to this day, in factories and plantations.

At the beginning of 1979, a year devoted to the child, the International Labour Organisation pointed out that 52 million children were at work in the world and that their plight deserved special attention.

The chart reproduced below (table 3) indicates the geographical distribution of these 52 million children. The figures shown only indicate an order of magnitude and as such are probably far below the truth, child labour being an extremely flexible concept which is interpreted differently in different parts of the world.

Due to the existence of international Conventions and Recommendations, governments, as well as employers, are reluctant to give accurate information with regard to children who are still below the minimum age for admission to employment. Parents, who badly need the proceeds of the clandestine work of their children, keep silent, while the trade union organisations tend to concern themselves exclusively with the material and moral interests of their adult, wage-earning members.

The result is a conspiracy of silence, with children as the victims. Despite this silence, we have to try to analyse the problems posed by child labour.

As mainly children in poor countries are involved, we can find them in the three employment sectors characteristic of the underdeveloped world, namely:

- the modern wage-earning sector;
- the informal urban sector;
- the rural, and principally agricultural, sector.

Child labour in the modern sector

These children benefit, in principle, from the protection of international regulations in the field of labour. The majority of developing countries have, in fact, ratified the main Conventions and Recommendations of the International Labour Organisation concerning minimum age of admission to employment, night work of women and children, medical inspection and the promotion of vocational training.[9]

Table 3: Children and work - 1979

Area	Total active (millions)	Unpaid family workers[1]	
		Per cent of total active	(Millions)
World	52.0	80	41.2
More developed regions	1.3	40	0.5
Less developed regions	50.7	80	40.6
South Asia	29.0	80	23.2
East Asia	9.1	70	6.4
Africa	9.7	95	9.2
Latin America	3.1	65	2.0
Europe	0.7	50	0.4
USSR	-	-	-
Northern America	0.3	10	-
Oceania	0.1	85	0.1

[1] Includes workers on own account.

Source: ILO, Bureau of Statistics. IYC Graph No. 14

(a) Minimum age of admission to employment

The Dahir of 12 July 1947 stipulated that, in Morocco, children under 12 years of age may not be employed, whether as wage earners or as apprentices. Since then, there has been progressive raising of the minimum age for admission to employment all over the continent. It now ranges from 14 years (in Niger, Upper Volta and Rwanda, among others) to 17 years (for children being trained in various crafts in the Congolese "New School" system).

In any event and in the words of Mr. Ali Bandiare, Vice-President of the Court of Appeal of Niamey: "The legislator intended by these provisions to prevent any black market in child labour developing in countries where the young go out at an early age in search of employment."[10]

It should, moreover, be noted that the legal minimum age for admission to employment is not an absolute and invariable standard, since the International Labour Organisation itself lays down different ages, depending on the nature of the work and the conditions under which it is performed. Thus the minimum age is 15 for underground work, 15 for industry and 14 for agriculture.

Furthermore, governments always have the possibility of authorising children under the legal minimum age to be admitted to tasks that are considered to be light.

Thus, in the Central African Republic, the legal minimum age is 14, "except where derogation has been granted, by decree, by the Minister in charge of Labour, after consulting the Advisory Commission on Labour and taking into account local conditions as well as the tasks involved." Similar provisions are to be found in most national legislations.

The latest ILO position with regard to minimum age for admission to work takes national situations into account and is contained in Convention No. 138 of 1973, Article 1 of which stipulates:

> Each member for which this Convention is in force undertakes to pursue a national policy designed to ensure the effective abolition of child labour and to raise progressively the minimum age for admission to employment or work to a level consistent with the fullest physical and mental development of young persons.

At the moment the Convention has been ratified by 15 States, including four African States: Kenya, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Niger and Zambia.

(b) Conditions of work

Young workers, who are in the process of full physical and mental growth, need special protection as regards the duration and intensity of work, health and hygienic conditions of the premises and medical inspection.

That is why most countries protect the young against night work, the carrying of loads exceeding their strength, and the handling of dangerous machinery and toxic substances.

Decree No. 539/ITLS/HV of 29 July 1954 concerning child labour under the French colonial administration may be regarded as summing up the legal provisions adopted in this field by a good many African countries:

Article 2 of the Decree stipulates:

"In no case may children be subjected to an actual working schedule exceeding eight hours a day. The daily work schedule should compulsorily be broken by one or more rest periods the total of which should not be less than two hours."

Other articles lay down as follows:

"In factories, plants, mines, quarries, construction sites, workshops, and their annexes, child labourers or apprentices may not be employed on any night work between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m."

"Children should have at least 11 consecutive hours of rest per day."

"It is forbidden to make children under 16 years of age work at stands outside shops and stalls."

The Decree does not forget the need to protect the moral and physical health of young workers. It accordingly forbids "the employment of children, in the production, handling and sale of writings, printed matter, posters, drawings, engravings, emblems, pictures and other objects the sale, distribution, exhibition, display or disposal of which is likely to be detrimental to their morals or have a harmful influence on them." It goes on to add:

"All recruitment of children should be the subject of a statement by the employer. He should submit the children to medical inspection by the company doctor or, in the absence of such a doctor, by an authorised medical practitioner, to make sure that the work to be assigned to them does not exceed their strength and does not involve any risk to health."

It would be interesting to examine to what extent, a quarter of a century after its promulgation, the newly independent African nations have maintained and improved the colonial legislation and particularly to what extent African labour administrations are able to enforce the laws protecting children from exploitation.

This is a problem meriting attention, taking into account the derisory sanctions (fines of 2,000 to 20,000 francs CFA; six to ten days' imprisonment) provided for infringement of laws and regulations relating to child labour and of the Labour Code in general.

Visits by certain humanitarian organisations have revealed that, in some African countries, flourishing carpet factories employ girls, from the age of 8, on work schedules exceeding eight hours a day, in badly ventilated, badly lit, crowded premises, without the elementary toilet and hygienic facilities. Thanks to the system of matrons, who act as intermediaries between the employers and the girls, the employers have practically no obligations towards the unfortunate girls and pay them ridiculously low wages.

In seeking to improve the labour legislation relating to child labour in our countries, it should be noted that many of the enterprises are small in size and, as such, pass as family undertakings, thus escaping the application of labour legislation. One must also ask oneself what is the impact of such labour legislation which only applies, in practice, to the organised wages sector.

In our countries, the biggest employer is frequently the State which takes steps to ensure that children under 18 are not employed by its services and that the working conditions with regard to wages, health and hygiene are good.

Apart from the State, a few private enterprises, dependent on foreign capital, provide employment for a very limited number of workers. As the exploitation of the mineral wealth of our continent is likely to be stepped up, and as consumer goods and luxury goods industries (textiles, clothing, confectionery, toys, matches, bags, shoes, weaving and embroidery) continue to be established, it is necessary to be watchful of the abuses noted in other developing regions which are only able to export their industrial products by exploiting underpaid child labour.

Children working in the informal urban sector

An ill-conceived school system, which is only concerned with a part of the population, and the deterioration of living conditions in the rural areas facing the dazzling lights of the cities, encourage rural exodus and rapid and chaotic urbanisation. Although the rural population in Africa still comprises 75 per cent of the population (as compared with a world average of 60 per cent), it must be stressed that "between 1970 and 1975 the urban population in Africa increased at an average rate of 5 per cent and the rural population at 2 per cent, compared to the world rate of growth of 3.2 per cent for the urban population and 1.3 per cent for the rural".

In addition to the internal migration from bush to city, there is a strong migratory movement from the land-locked countries to the coastal countries. In West Africa, for example, the Ivory Coast, Ghana and Nigeria drain millions of workers, particularly from Niger, Mali and Upper Volta.

The principal motivation behind these population movements is the search for paid employment. As the creation of paid employment lags behind demand, the number of those declared to be jobless at present amounts to 10 per cent of the economically active population of the cities, which is clearly an underestimate. According to the UN Economic Commission for Africa, "underemployment affects about 26 per cent of the economically active urban population and 40 per cent of the economically active rural. In other words, in 1975, over 30 per cent of the economically active African population, or over 60 million persons in all, were victims of unemployment or underemployment."[3]

In order to survive, the majority of the population living in the cities is forced to improvise jobs, the latter being taken to mean "any activity which provides the person exercising it with sufficient gain to satisfy his needs". Informal urban employment is, therefore, a major reality of developing countries as it provides a livelihood for 80 to 90 per cent of the urban population of a country like Upper Volta.[6] It thus increasingly holds the attention of development specialists and planners, such as the author who wrote: "In fact, the multitude of small trades which form a part of daily life in the cities, the innumerable small shops of miscellaneous craftsmen, such as tailors, shoemakers, etc. and even certain itinerant tradesmen, constitute a very flexible and highly diversified network, the value of which should be acknowledged."[11]

Informal urban employment deserves our particular attention as it is in this sector that most of the children under 14 years of age are employed.

They are engaged as helpers or apprentices in the small, often family-owned, weaving, tailoring and food-processing enterprises where they are assigned to the packing and labelling of products.

A large number of them work in garages and small production and repair workshops, in restaurants, hotels, small shops and, above all, in hawking goods in the streets, which they roam for long hours, often late into the night, "exposed to dirt and traffic, as well as to the more sordid temptations of urban life".

Domestic service also provides employment for many very young children, boys and, particularly, girls, who are made to perform heavy chores such as pounding millet, carrying water, chopping firewood, washing clothes, etc.

The inadequacy of the water supply network and the acute problem of firewood provide opportunities for many boys to earn a little money by fetching and carrying these goods. Because of the deforestation and the growing aridity of certain regions of the continent, the young children leave in donkey carts at dawn to return at dusk. They travel over long distances either to buy the wood or to chop it themselves. They generally go in convoys, no doubt to reduce the boredom and fatigue of the trip. As the carts have no lights, there are frequent accidents despite the fact that the traffic is regulated.

There is also a great number of independent little workers who, hovering around the market places, shops, offices and theatre halls, offer to shine your shoes, carry your parcels or keep an eye on your car. Although they render services, these children often live on the margin of social utility and juvenile delinquency. One cannot avoid searching one's heart as one drops a coin to these children in rags and tatters, knowing that the solution of the problem lies elsewhere.

Be that as it may, the majority of children employed in the informal sector work in harsh conditions and for almost non-existent wages. They are often exploited, without really having a chance to learn a trade. They sometimes prepare themselves for marginal trades, not requiring any great vocational skills and, therefore, badly paid and without any social security protection. Although such apprentices and helpers are often given boarding, lodging and sometimes clothing, they seldom receive any cash wages. The little girls who sell peanuts are exposed to the dangers of the streets and the meagreness of their wares makes them very vulnerable to certain temptations for increasing their capital and their profits.

Many rural parents hand over their children to the care of "relatives" in town in the hope of giving them better conditions of life. Because of their age and their social situation, the so-called "adopted" children, like the young servants, are practically without any protection.

Is it not time that the well-to-do families of the cities gave these young workers the same fair wages and good working conditions that they demand for themselves?

And, in order not to limit ourselves to pious hopes, would it not be advisable to organise these young people of the informal sector to make them conscious of their social utility and help them to defend their interests?

Children employed in rural areas

A quick survey of the demographic situation in Africa showed us that the majority of the population still lives in rural areas and devotes itself mainly to agriculture.

Table 4 shows that during the 20 years which separate us from the year 2000, the number of children living in rural conditions will far exceed those living in urban areas, notwithstanding the high rates of urbanisation registered in our countries. The reason is that in the villages, children, together with women, comprise a greatly appreciated workforce. For the moment, they are irreplaceable for certain tasks such as minding the cattle, cleaning and watching over the fields, sowing, weeding, bringing in the harvest, fetching water and wood.

Table 4: Number of children under age 15 in urban and rural areas, world, selected regions, 1975, 1980, 1990 and 2000 (in millions)

		1975	1980	1990	2000
World	urban	504	586	770	953
	rural	924	970	1 066	1 072
More developed regions	urban	195	204	234	249
	rural	88	79	70	58
Less developed regions	urban	309	382	536	704
	rural	836	891	996	1 014
Africa	urban	42	55	87	133
	rural	135	149	186	217
Latin America	urban	82	99	137	174
	rural	54	55	58	58
South Asia	urban	124	152	226	290
	rural	415	457	527	539

These data are based on United Nations projections prepared in 1973. The total numbers of children for 1975 and 2000 differ slightly from those for the same years shown in earlier charts and cited in the text which are based on more recent estimates and projections by the World Bank and the US Bureau of the Census.

In dividing countries' populations into "urban" and "rural", the United Nations follows the definitions of individual countries. These can vary widely. For example, the minimum number of inhabitants needed to classify a place as "urban" can range from as few as 200 people (Denmark) to as many as 50,000 (Japan).

Source: McHale, M.C., et al.: Children in the world. Washington, DC. Population Reference Bureau, Inc. 1979. United Nations Populations Division, WP 54.

Young children are called upon to help their parents very early in life. Hence peasant couples consider sterility as a curse. A man whose wife is childless, even if he himself is the cause, marries additional wives in the hope that they might bear him children and, in any event, help him with the work. His economic and social status depend on his origin and, above all, on the size of his family, which should be large.

The relative modernisation of agriculture has not, however, freed the children who are employed in guiding the plough animals and in executing the numerous tasks involved in attending to the crops, spreading manure, etc.

In the cash crop plantations, migrant workers often get their children to help them or arrange to have them engaged as seasonal workers, particularly at the harvest picking time for coffee, cocoa, cotton or tea.

Protective legislation for agricultural workers is practically non-existent in Africa. The minimum age for agricultural work, where it exists, is lower than that for other occupational sectors.

Can labour legislation mean anything to the majority of rural children who work with their parents, the family being the best setting for education?

Is it possible to improve the working conditions of peasants without a coherent and effective programme of rural development, which would change production methods in such a way that parents will be less dependent on the help of their children? What is important is that we should search for new forms of organisation, and for new roles for the existing organisations, so as to improve the living conditions of rural workers and their children.

Protection of children against violence, abuse, neglect and bodily harm

In Africa, children are usually desired, well received and well treated, naturally within the means at each one's disposal. One can claim that, in a certain sense, African society achieves that "sweet and warm society" which the Swedes, the champions of child protection, always dream about. But everything is relative and what is true of the wealthy societies of Nordic countries may not be true of the underdeveloped continent that Africa still is.

One proof is the prohibition of spanking and humiliating treatment, among examples of which Swedish law cites "shutting up the child in a dark cupboard" and "dressing him in clothes which are so old or ridiculous as to make the child a laughing-stock". How many African parents would thus have to be condemned for only being able to dress their children in the second-hand clothes imported from the rich countries - a trade which exists in all the city and village markets of Africa? It is true that where poverty is general, no one makes fun of the children.

Yes, Africans still think that to spare the rod is to spoil the child and they administer corporal punishment to their children without many qualms, in the conviction that they are doing their duty. A legal ban on corporal punishment requires social conditions permitting new types of relationships to be established between parents and children, quite distinct from the relations based on parental authority of gerontocratic African society. While it might be advisable to look for such new relationships and for ways of helping parents to stop slapping and spanking their children, the new formulae should not deprive parents of the means of exercising their educational responsibilities.

In the meantime, it can be affirmed that cruel parents and children martyrised by their parents are not very common in Africa. However, orphans and so-called adopted children are sometimes ill-treated, deprived of their possessions as a result of certain customs and exploited without due compensation.

In urban areas, where many families are crowded together, there is not always enough space for children. The latter literally find themselves thrown into the streets, the only place where, at great risk, they can play and amuse themselves.

When one hears the frequent announcements about lost children being found and handed over to the police in our cities, one is tempted to ask whether these are problems of housing and urbanisation or a simple question of negligence on the part of the parents.

The colonial authorities had devised a punishment in keeping with their idea of the best way of treating their subjects. In those days, before handing over a lost child to its family, the mother was taken to the police station and publicly whipped. Now that we are independent, what sanctions and, in particular, what preventive measures have we found to avoid children being lost in market places and in the neighbourhoods of their homes?

Premature and forced marriages seriously infringe the rights of the child. That is why countries, which establish a family code, make it a point to protect girls of 12 from being forced into marriage with men old enough to be their fathers if not grandfathers. It must be admitted, however, that very little has been done to call attention to and improve the Mandel and Jacquinot Decrees, issued in the last years of colonial rule, and which remain the only legal protection in many French-speaking countries. But let us come to the point and speak about excision, a form of violence par excellence, which for some time now has been mobilising the attention, the energies and the resources of humanitarian organisations.

From the North to the South, from the West to the East of the continent, one finds ethnic groups practising the excision of girls. What is, in fact, the significance of this practice? Can the physical operation be dissociated from the educational value previously attached to the ceremonies and rites accompanying it?

Does excision involve physical and psychological dangers for the little girls subjected to it?

Sociologists and physicians, educators and journalists of international organisations, such as the WHO or the Subcommittee on Excision of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, have studied the problem with a view to trying to understand its origins, its different techniques and its immediate and long-term consequences.

The origins of excision seem to date back to the earliest times as the operation is known to have been performed some centuries before Christ. The religious and cultural justifications are no longer very clear in the minds of the peoples who practise it today. The reasons most frequently put forward are "the attenuation of sexual desire and considerations of female hygiene", and, on the other hand, the social integration ensured by rites and ceremonies accompanying the operation. These reasons are summed up by a reader who wrote to his local newspaper in Upper Volta on 4 September 1979 as follows: "School children have now been on holiday for two or three months. For many mothers, grandmothers and aunts the time has come to take these numerous little girls out of 'the valley of shame' and turn them into 'clean women'."

After calling attention to the clear responsibility of women in the survival of female circumcision, the contributor, who signs himself "shocked conscience", signatises the attitude of parents, some of whom have their daughters circumcised on the pretext that it will make them more faithful to their husbands, while others do so not so much because they are convinced of the need for excision but because they are afraid of incurring public approbrium as the only ones not to observe the tradition.

The girls themselves do not escape the pressure of social circles. "Ostracised by public opinion and subjected to the gibes of the people around them, they demand excision as they would demand anything else."

Would the adoption of appropriate national legislation give parents and children the courage needed to abandon excision? The reply is not necessarily in the affirmative because, as Dr. A.H. Taba[12] writes: "Some countries such as Sudan have tried to forbid the practice of female circumcision and promulgated special legislation. It turned out to be impossible to apply these laws and the practice of female circumcision continues. Generally speaking, the traditional social groups never accepted these laws, whether in theory or in practice, and it did not prove possible to integrate this legislation into the social and cultural system. The political climate did not permit their application to be imposed and the socio-psychological atmosphere of the communities to which they were applicable was rather hostile to action of this type."[12]

There is a similarity between legal banning and the mass-media campaigns launched by certain well-meaning persons and humanitarian associations which, far from achieving their goals, "were sometimes interpreted as a threat to national solidarity and an uncalled-for interference in the social and cultural life of the community".[12]

In these circumstances, whether it is a question of socio-political climate or of the social and cultural life of the communities, the only valid approach seems to be an effort, at the national and regional levels, to identify the most effective pressure groups and channels of communication which could be relied upon to conceive and, above all, disseminate pertinent sociological information.

Could our Symposium make a start with this thinking effort and conceive the machinery necessary to pursue it with a view to formulating national policies for the eradication of female circumcision?

The fight against this practice cannot be improvised as it appears to have a deeper cultural significance than the custom of racial scarification, both being simultaneously practised by the same surgeons among the Massasi of Mali and the Yorubas of Nigeria.

Why have some of these groups completely abandoned the tribal scars which used to be carved into the flesh of men as well as women, whereas they still continue to practise excision despite its clearly demonstrated psychological, social and economic consequences?

Why are women themselves the artisans and most zealous defenders of this sexual mutilation which today affects 30 million African women?

Have we completed our survey of the abuses and violence which wound the African child in the flesh and in the mind? Surely not, because in many insidious and cynical ways neo-colonialism, racism and apartheid subject the families and the children of our continent to spoliation, emigration, exile and war. The children of South Africa, Zimbabwe and the front-line States know this structural violence which separates fathers from their families shut up in the Bantustans, forces mothers and children to face the problems of sickness and poverty without the support of the head of the family, obliges orphans to fend for themselves or seek shelter in refugee camps where they are not spared air attacks.

If we have not forgotten the children massacred at Sharpeville in 1961 and at Soweto in 1976, what can we do as adults? What steps can we propose to our children in our respective countries to protect the rights of African children who are victims of economic spoliation, racism and apartheid?

The role of non-governmental organisations in the protection of the child

One of the characteristics of developing countries and, in particular, of African countries is the monopolistic tendency of the government and of the party (often a single party) in power, to want to do everything on its own. Where the party, or parties, are well-structured and cover the population as a whole, such an ambition might be justified. However, it should not prevent voluntary organisations from making a contribution, particularly in fields where government action is found to be insufficient.

Health problems clearly require priority attention in our countries. The morbidity and mortality rates show that the present utilisation of human and financial resources allocated to public health does not hold out much hope that the needs of the younger generations will be met in the near future. These generations therefore remain the most vulnerable. It is well known that nutritional deficiencies and parasitosis undermine the health of our children and weaken the workforce that they represent for the future.

Insufficient primary schooling and the lack of vocational schools explain, to a large extent, why children enter early into the workforce. We have already called attention to the link that exists in the industrialised countries between compulsory schooling and the age of entry into employment.

Non-governmental organisations which really wish to contribute to development through the protection of children will find great scope for action in the specific fields of nutrition, health, education and vocational training which constitute some of the basic needs of the population.

Moreover, many foreign non-governmental organisations, especially European and American, have created nutrition and health centres and primary, secondary and vocational schools which reinforce the efforts of the government.

However, in addition to these concrete manifestations of international solidarity, particular consideration has to be given to the type of non-governmental organisations and associations which could be created by Africans themselves to encourage endogenous, participative and self-reliant development.

Thanks to the development of rural radio programmes and to meetings with governmental authorities, the populations receive a great deal of advice and encouragement for national development.

What types of associations and what methods would be the most suitable in passing from fine words to concrete action to transform the villages and really improve the conditions of living of the people?

Could a village committee for community development or an association of the young put forward a coherent plan for improving health and hygiene conditions in the village or the neighbourhood, including the protection of the water supply from pollution, the construction of latrines, reforestation and market-gardening to ensure a balanced diet? Would such planned and co-ordinated efforts be more likely to mobilise the energies of the young than ad hoc human investment activities which are more like a flash in the pan?

Are youth movements, associations of parents or parent-teacher associations, or organisations of educators capable of conceiving leisure-time activities which would include an element of training to rehabilitate physical and manual work, to restore educational and protective value to work and to impart some vocational skills?

In labour matters, the associations best equipped to protect the rights of children are probably women's and youth organisations and the trade unions.

The latter usually know the labour code of their country and have a general idea of international labour legislation. They are in the best position to know the abuses to which their young members are exposed and also in the best position to exert pressure on the employer and the legislator.

But who will take up the cudgels for the majority of young people employed in the informal urban and rural sectors? Where the adults themselves are unorganised and, hence, unprotected what hope is there for children?

These questions are a challenge to African trade unionism which cannot be content only to look after the interests of workers in the modern sector and base its action on the model of workers in the rich countries.

They are also a challenge to the youth and women's movements whose action programmes, in addition to the organisation of parties, cinema shows and fashion displays, should include an informational effort and some action in the defence of the working child.

Measures for the protection of children whose parents work away from home

In a general way, the family is considered the best protective structure for the child and, within the family, women are regarded as being more directly responsible for the young child.

That is how, freed from all family and domestic concerns, the man can go out to work whereas the woman has constantly to reconcile her double role of mother and worker.

Women have always been hard workers in Africa where the domestic chores can be a veritable drudgery. With their children strapped to their backs, African women fulfil the traditional tasks of pounding the millet, fetching firewood and water and bringing in the harvest. They have no other help but that of their mothers or mothers-in-law and of their little daughters whose schooling can be jeopardised by domestic work and the care of their little brothers.

In certain urban or semi-urban centres, women no longer benefit from the assistance, in baby-sitting and education of children, that the traditional extended family offers. The grandmothers have stayed behind in the village and the mothers, conscious of the harmful effects of illiteracy, want their daughters to go to school. Women who have had the good fortune to have had some schooling invariably aspire to exercise some profession, both in order to be independent and out of economic necessity.

Thus, the children are abandoned to the care of "adopted" children and of domestic servants whose knowledge and aptitudes with regard to hygiene, nutrition and child psychology leave much to be desired. Is it not risky to entrust the feeding of a child (its milk, mash, fruits, etc.) to a young servant who, perhaps hungry herself, can hardly resist the temptation of sharing the baby's meal?

In recent years, a tendency has been noticed among women, whether working women or not, to reduce the period of breast-feeding and quickly put the child entirely on artificial milk. Now, it has been sufficiently established that the best milk is the mother's milk. Furthermore, the facilities for proper cleanliness and conservation, both of the feeding bottle and the milk, are virtually non-existent so that, in the absence of proper hygiene and proper dosage, diarrhoea and gastro-enteritis take a heavy toll of such artificially fed children.

In these circumstances, should not the first campaign to be launched in our countries be in favour of breast-feeding and for the strengthening of labour legislation to ensure that a sufficiently long maternity leave and a break of one hour a day for breast-feeding is granted to women to reconcile their economic and social usefulness with their maternal responsibilities?

The great mass of women who work in the markets and in the fields certainly deserve some form of assistance in the care and early education of their young children.

Day nurseries and kindergarten schools are springing up and pre-school education is being given pride of place in our countries. But governments which are grappling with general schooling problems often regard day nurseries and kindergartens as luxuries that only rich families can afford.

Some non-governmental organisations and, particularly, women's associations have begun to establish a relationship between the working conditions of women and the protection of their children. This awakening of consciousness deserves to be encouraged if one wishes to expand women's access to employment (paid or not) and, more generally, their participation in decision making and national development.

Are the day nurseries and kindergartens, in their present form, a satisfactory solution to the problems of parents who work away from home?

It has already been pointed out that these pre-school institutions are privately owned and therefore fee-charging. The low-paid workers and cultivators do not have access to them. The personnel employed is not always properly qualified nor has the required equipment. Hence the distressing spectacle of little tots seated in a row, their arms crossed and their eyes glued to a blackboard bearing some letters of the alphabet which these unfortunate children are already expected to learn.

Immobilised in a classroom, bereft of any decorations or toys, these children seem totally lost and abandoned in the face of the strange language imposed on them. Weaned from their mother tongues, they are brutally propelled into the world of the language of the colonisers, which their teachers as well as their parents are anxious that they should learn. Is it surprising that these children do not play as much as they would do at home and take shelter behind a prudent, if not frightened, silence?

Under the pretext that little children learn foreign languages easily and that one must take advantage of this period, should one underestimate the problem of cultural roots?

If language is the first factor in the development of cultural roots, our day nurseries and kindergartens might consider associating mothers and grandmothers in the intellectual awakening of their children through games, songs, tales and legends. It might also be worth considering the introduction of toys and educational material conceived and produced by local artisans.

In this domain, as in many others, pure and simple transfer of formulae developed in other contexts is to be avoided in favour of original solutions utilising the available means to as to satisfy the greatest possible number of persons.

Conclusion

Principle 9 of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child proclaims: "The child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation ... The child shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age; he shall, in no case, be caused or permitted to engage in any occupation or employment which would prejudice his health or education, or interfere with his physical, mental or moral development."

A rapid survey of the plight of the African child, prematurely introduced into the world of work, shows us how large is the gap between principles and realities.

But principles are beacons which should guide the path of humanity towards justice, peace and happiness for all. They stress the tragedy of a sick and undernourished child, sad and neglected in a hovel, whereas he should have the "right to adequate food, lodging, leisure and medical care", the tragedy of a child condemned to grow up without his father, or both his parents, because they have to migrate in search of work, to seek exile in order to escape repression, to take up arms in order to regain their liberty and their dignity, whereas he "should, as much as possible, grow up under the care and the responsibility of his parents and, in any case, in an atmosphere of affection and moral and material security", whereas he, the child, victim of injustice, "should be protected against practices which could lead to racial, religious or any other form of discrimination".

The International Year of the Child, which is about to end, will not and could not have redressed all these wrongs and all these conflicts. But it will have reminded nations as well as men and women, individually and collectively, that social justice between nations and within nations is the sine qua non for the protection of the rights of the child. These rights will not be respected if parents do not have access to food, to health, to education, to employment and to participation in government so as to protect and defend their children.

The International Year of the Child questions us particularly about what we shall do after 31 December 1979.

Will our national commissions congratulate themselves smugly on their success or will they admit failure before they disband? Will they be absorbed into other national commissions (such as the existing commissions for the integration of women in development and national planning) to play a catalytic role, or will they continue to sit as permanent organisms for the supervision of progress, for stimulating new measures and co-ordinating the activities to be undertaken in favour of children?

It is clear that children, immature and far from the centres of power, need pressure groups and mediators who, while the children work in order not to die of hunger and not to go around naked, will not sit back and proclaim principles, which would amount to saying to the children: "Go in peace, warm yourselves, gorge yourselves!"

Notes

[1] Samir Amin: "Population et développement", in Développement et Civilisations (Paris, IRFED), Mar.-June 1972.

[2] Albert Tévoédjrè: Poverty, Wealth of Mankind (Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1979), p. 40.

[3] What kind of Africa by the year 2000? Final Report of the Monrovia Symposium on the future development prospects of Africa towards the year 2000 (12-16 February 1979) (Geneva, OAU/IILS, 1979).

[4] The birth rates are: 47 per thousand for Africa, 16 per thousand for Europe, 38 per thousand for South America and 35 per thousand for Asia.

[5] Congrès de l'Institut international de droit d'expression française (Paris, 1979).

[6] Ambroise Songre (Director-General of Labour and Social Legislation): Les jeunes face au problème de l'emploi en Haute-Volta.

[7] Forty million child-workers in the world today. Cf. UNESCO Courrier, Oct. 1973.

[8] Declaration by the Director-General of the ILO concerning the International Year of the Child.

[9] See Appendix listing the ILO Conventions and Recommendations relating to these problems.

[10] Ali Bandiare: "L'enfant dans la société nigérienne", in Revue juridique et politique (Dakar, IDEP), 1976.

[11] Tévoédjrè, op. cit., p. 79.

[12] World Health, May 1979. Dr. A.H. Taba is the WHO Regional Representative for the Mediterranean region.

Appendix. ILO Conventions and Recommendations relating to children at work (1919-1975)

Conventions		No. of ratifications[1]
	I. Night work	
6	Night Work of Young Persons (Industry), 1919	54
79	Night Work of Young Persons (Non-Industrial Occupations), 1946	16
90	Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) (Revised), 1948	38
	II. Medical examination	
77	Medical Examination of Young Persons (Industry), 1946	30
78	Medical Examination of Young Persons (Non-Industrial Occupations), 1946	28
124	Medical Examination of Young Persons (Underground Work), 1965	30
	III. Prohibition of child labour by setting minimum age standards	
5	Minimum Age (Industry), 1919	62
10	Minimum Age (Agriculture), 1921	43
33	Minimum Age (Non-Industrial Employment), 1932	23
59	Minimum Age (Industry) (Revised), 1937	33
60	Minimum Age (Non-Industrial Employment) (Revised), 1937	11
123	Minimum Age (Underground Work), 1965	36

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[1] Jan. 1979.

Conventions		No. of ratifications
138	Minimum Age (For Admission to Employment), 1973	15
	IV. Promotion of vocational guidance	
142	Human Resources Development, 1975	8

Recommendations		No. of governments who have submitted texts to the competent authorities
	V. Minimum age	
124	Minimum Age (Underground Work), 1965	103
146	Minimum Age, 1973	83
80	Night Work of Young Persons (Non-Industrial Occupations), 1946	None
79	Medical Examination of Young Persons, 1946	None
125	Conditions of Employment of Young Persons (Underground Work), 1965	103
60	Apprenticeship, 1939	None
87	Vocational Guidance, 1949	54
150	Human Resources Development, 1975	50

CAREER GUIDANCE FOR CHILDREN

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Introduction

This working paper gives a description of the various aspects of training systems and the guidance given within them, based on the assumption that the Democratic Republic of the Sudan can be considered as an example of one of the developing countries of Africa. It also gives the conditions under which children are raised and, in particular, which influences have a direct bearing on the future participation of children in the labour force.

Because of the importance of education for both the present and future generations, the types of educational efforts outside the formal school system which help to increase the skills and productivity of farmers, shepherds, cattle-drovers, artisans, craftsmen and skilled labourers are also described.

The needs of the young child

Our long infancy starts at birth and preparation for an independent existence is completed through protection from extremes of heat and cold, appropriate nutrition and defence against injury and infantile diseases. During early infancy parents consider the development of the brain of the infant as well as the rapid rate of growth of the support systems of its body.

The infant also needs emotional support and he begins to depend on receiving affection from his mother. Language growth is likely to be developed through conversational interchanges between parents in homes. The infant passes through childhood with the gradual growth of both physical and psychological needs in homes where there is good conversational interchange, where parents protect the child from injury and disease and where there is balanced nutrition. This period extends from birth to 3 years, then the child develops physically and mentally to differentiate between colours and people. During the pre-school years, besides care, the child also needs a kind of education at home and in his environment in which rapid and continuous development can take place, notably in the earliest years of life. The dwelling-place provides the immediate pattern of physical support, and also provides the immediate social and emotional support and stimulation which are the child's first career-educators. In the family, those involved as career-educators are usually the mother, the father and older siblings. The entire early development of the child is a result of his experiences within the family, though it is subject to modifications as he grows older and inter-acts more with people outside the family. In rural areas of underdeveloped countries the child is reared in an extended family network while in a developed technological environment he is reared in a nuclear family of parents and children.

The young child is at the centre of a series of ever-widening circles of influence. The family, the local community, the society and, in recent years, the whole world are responsible for the care and education which affects his physical and mental ability. It becomes more important for the child that communication between his immediate environment - the family - and the society be mediated through the local activity of the community within which the family is located.

The education of the child therefore starts very soon after birth and is subsequently provided for by the intimate family circle and then by inter-action with wider circles of family, neighbours and community.

The basic needs of young children include physical and emotional security and a quantity and quality of perceptual and intellectual stimulation, appropriate to their age, until the point of entry to primary school. This varies in African countries from 5 to 8 years of age and in some countries 100 per cent find a place in a primary school and in others many children have no place in the educational system at all.

Education

Basic education is an attempt in the African countries, despite severe resource constraints, to meet the needs of substantial sections of the population who do not have access to even minimum educational opportunities. The main basic education programmes for children of the low-income countries suffer from tight financial constraints which have been made even more severe by the changes in the world economy associated with rapid increases in petroleum prices and other movements in terms of trade. This has led to a severe setback in the development of basic education and in spite of the considerable efforts made by the developing countries more than half of their citizens' children do not have a minimum level of education and the prospects for the next decade are not promising. There will be significant increases in the total numbers of out-of-school children and illiterate children if no remedial action is taken. It is not only the responsibility of the low income countries but also constitutes an important area of action for the responsible agencies of the interested international organisations such as UNICEF, ILO, UNIDO and UNESCO.

The main features of basic education within the formal educational system of African countries are the formal primary schools, which however are considered as only one part of a system designed to bring the child to the stage of being able to read and write and to upgrade his arithmetic. Other parallel programmes, such as Koranic schools (e.g. in the Sudan, Somalia and Mauritania) and village schools (e.g. in Ethiopia) where village priests are being trained for educational work, are also being considered as means of providing basic education. The use of special programmes such as rural education centres in Upper Volta, which serve young people aged 15 to 20 years, or integrated rural education centres trial schemes in the Sudan, which are designed to be high-level primary schools and community development centres are also being considered.

Formal education

Most countries of the world today build their formal education on a three-level structure - primary, secondary and higher. The duration of general education spans the first two levels - primary and secondary. Thus, over-all formal education consists of two levels - general and higher education. The period of general education varies between 10 and 12 years. Experience in African countries demonstrates the effectiveness of this period in preparing students to a level of education where they are equipped with the qualifications necessary to enter life either in a junior or middle post in government institutions or in the private sector. The child who continues his education to the end of the general education period faces life at the age of 17 to 20 years, a stage of suitable maturity and growth. In a country like the Sudan 12 to 15 per cent of this age group will have the opportunity of completing 12 years of general education.

Children in some African countries today begin their formal education in the primary school at the age of 7 or 8 which is late in comparison with most African countries which fix the age of school entry at 6 and many other countries which fix it before that.

The primary school

Taking the Sudan as an example, the educational efforts at this level aim at universal enrolment. It appears from statistics that the ratio of enrolment in the first year of primary school does not exceed 40 per cent of all children aged 7 and that there has been no annual rate of increase in the past five years. One of the biggest obstacles to universal primary education revolves around the financial and technical potentialities of the country. All schools occupy similar buildings, have similar numbers of teachers and are totally dependent on the State. This makes them all of one pattern in all parts of the country under all conditions of differing environment and life, whereas the Sudan really requires considerable variations in types of school. The following are some of the suggested variations:

(a) The integrated rural education centre. This is an ideal form of primary school in a rural setting, having the following facilities: six classrooms; a home economics room; an agricultural workshop; an agricultural tools store; a farm; and a dispensary.

It is a centre of social life in addition to teaching children up to the standard of primary education. It has environmental trades and training in agriculture, and opens its doors to literacy teaching, adult education and training in all that is associated with life in the village and countryside, for example, agriculture, co-operatives, home economics, health and rural industries. The school takes its place as a unit for medical care, health guidance, maternity and child care. It provides opportunities for continual education based on comprehensive programmes in which local government employees, assistant medical and health officers, agricultural officers and qualified experts in the neighbouring countryside would participate as teachers. Thirty centres will be established by the IDA/World Bank/Sudan second educational project. Plans are being made in the Ministry of Education to establish 160 such centres during the five years up to 1982.

(b) The primary school (for six years). This may be a single-sex school, a co-educational school or a one-teacher school. In all these cases it is a day-school accepting children of the age of 7 and 8. The Government gives a share of the capital cost of building every year for six years and the people by self-help complete the building and furniture. The share of the Government is usually between 20 and 50 per cent of the capital cost. The running of the school is financed by local authorities.

(c) The Koranic school. There are at present more than 2,700 Koranic schools throughout the country attended by more than 190,000 children who spend an average of three to five years in them and then start life and continue to teach themselves. A recent field study has shown that 37 per cent of these pupils enter primary schools and continue their education.

The Koranic school depends on private local effort and assistance from local councils. It is local people who prepare the place of study and one teacher carries out all the teaching and supervision of different levels of pupils of mixed ages. In some Koranic schools the pupils work on the farm or look after the breeding of cattle under the supervision of the teacher and the income from these activities is utilised in the schools.

(d) The village school. There are over 28,000 pupils in more than 300 village schools in the southern region of the Sudan. They play a great part in basic education. They rely on local councils, self-help of the people and the World Council of Churches. The latter helps by providing the teachers for these schools as in the case of one-teacher or two-teacher schools.

The Secondary level

The secondary level of six or seven years is split into a general secondary stage of three years and a higher secondary stage of three years for academic students (arts and sciences) or four years for technical students (agriculture, industry, commerce and home economics).

General secondary schools or intermediate schools enrol about 13 per cent of children in the age group 13-15 in the Sudan.

The higher technical schools comprise vocational schools in agriculture, commerce, home economics (girls), industry and teacher-training in all of which the period of study is four years after nine years of primary and general secondary education. These train skilled labourers and assistant technicians are required for the social and economic development of the country. The higher secondary technical schools offer tuition in all those academic subjects which are taught in the academic secondary schools (Arabic language, religion, mathematics and English) besides which 50 per cent of the time is allocated to workshop practice and allied technology. These schools provide training in craft and different trades for up-grading labourers, typists, clerks, accountants and farmers in evening classes.

Higher education

The duration of study in higher education differs according to the field of specialisation in universities, technical colleges and other institutes, varying usually between two and six years.

Non-formal education

The fields of education outside the school system are extensive and their activities in society today are varied. For underdeveloped countries educational needs for rural development are numerous and diverse, but they can be usefully grouped under three main headings:

(1) Occupational education - designed to develop particular knowledge and skills associated with various economic activities useful in making a living.

(2) Family improvement education - designed primarily to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes useful in improving the quality of family life on such subjects as health and nutrition, child care, home repairs, family planning, etc.

(3) Community improvement education - designed to strengthen local and national institutions and processes through instruction in such matters as local and national government, co-operatives, community projects, etc.

In rural non-formal education it is found that the most notable exceptions are adult literacy programmes which exist in one form or another in most developing countries.

Taking Sudan as an example, in spite of the difficulty of enumerating all non-formal activities carried out in this field, they can be grouped into: (a) literacy and adult functional education; (b) youth training centres; (c) in-service vocational training centres; and (d) rural community development.

(a) Literacy and adult functional education. Illiteracy is a disgrace and a hindrance to development but the problem is too big to be left to the formal educational system whose first concern is to expand schools for educating children and youth. Illiteracy at present is increasing in spite of the efforts expended in this field. A central organisation for literacy has been established in the Sudan Socialist Union (the political organisation of state which is the alliance of the army, trade unions, farmers, workers, merchants and private enterprises) with the right to employ all trained personnel and spread them as a network over the whole country. Success in adult literacy depends to a large extent on eradicating it at its source by making primary education universal. If this were achieved, the effort spent on adult literacy would be temporary and could then be turned to other fields. For this reason, illiteracy must be fought in the case of both adults and children.

(b) Youth training centres. Training centres are run by a number of government departments and large private companies run courses in different crafts and trades providing opportunities of education for some of those who dropped out between educational levels and in those fields of specialisation practised in the departments and companies concerned. The method adopted for drop-outs from primary schools who failed to go through to the general secondary level is to send them to training courses in youth centres and farms established by the Department of Youth of the Ministry of Education and Guidance. The trade unions and the local people's councils are participating in the establishment of these centres. The centres offer vocational courses in trades identified by local demand.

(c) In-service vocational training centres. The method adopted in these centres is to accept students who have passed the general secondary level for apprenticeships, the training for which is gained mostly through actual work. The training centre offers courses in ten trades: electrical, auto-mechanics, auto-electricity, carpentry, welding, blacksmithing, machining, fitting, sheet metal working and plumbing. The courses comprise ten months of instruction at the centre, a year in the industry, then another ten months of instruction, six hours a day for six days a week.

(d) Rural community development. Rural people comprise the vast majority of the population in the developing world and virtually all of them are potential clients for non-formal education, whether they live on farms, in villages, whether they are nomadic drovers of cattle or live in rural market towns. Most rural areas in developing countries are characterised by poverty in their educational as well as in their economic resources. There are many educational programmes for family and community improvement carried out by extension officers in rural areas. There are programmes designed for health, nutrition, home economics, husbandry, agriculture, food processing, cattle breeding, etc.

The demand for the skills of youth

As our society, with the development of technology, places more emphasis on finding new and better techniques of production and organisation, so the proportion of the highly trained human resources it employs will rise. In essence, the pace of innovation is linked to the rate of increase and the effectiveness of utilisation of the labour force.

In the post-independence period in the 1960s in African countries there has been a great increase in expenditure on the development of agriculture and the allied industries of agricultural product processing, e.g. the textile industry, food processing, the sugar industry, etc. The regulation in the Sudan, as an example of the establishment of any project, is that a minimum of one-half per cent of the capital expenditure must be for financing the training of youth who will be the craftsmen and operators in industry or the farmers and mechanics in agriculture. A special youth (aged 14 plus) employment and training scheme has been developed within the framework of the national plans where these exist and fully integrated with human resources are plans and programmes directed towards the achievement of full and productive employment.

Normal youth employment and training

The International Labour Conference of the International Labour Organisation at its 54th Session on 3 June 1970 proposed an international labour Convention and Recommendations on the training and employment of young persons, considering special youth employment schemes and training schemes designed to give young persons the necessary skills to enable them to adapt to the pace of a changing society. The Sudan Government follows this Convention and the Recommendations on the training and employment of young persons aged 15 in all new projects - private schemes, semi-government schemes and local government projects. The projects include training and information leaflets are distributed in the locality of the project to attract the youth to join the training facilities of the new schemes in agriculture or industry. Large schemes which are a combination of agriculture and industry, such as the sugar industry, have a common training scheme for young future farmers, semi-skilled labourers, machine operators and maintenance forces. Such training schemes are announced on the radio, television and in the newspapers with full confirmation of the following data: training facilities and duration of different courses and trades; age of participants; required standards of education for entry; scholarships given during the training period; payment on success of training; minimum period required to work within the industry after training; the conditions of service including holidays, accommodation and post-service benefits.

Continual education

The large number of children finishing their education at a certain level and not proceeding to the next level, the children who only enrol in primary education and the drop-outs within the various educational levels will all be in need of further education and training to obtain a skill for living. None of these will succeed in realising his or her wish for continual education unless two conditions are satisfied: (a) the existence of an individual incentive; (b) the availability of suitable opportunities.

The first factor is promoted by the creation of a suitable atmosphere in society and good communication of information within the facilities available in the country. The second factor is the field where the national development plans can play their role. The national socio-economic development plan requires finances which most African countries cannot afford from their national incomes, so the careers of African children also depend on the assistance which the developed countries and the petroleum-producing countries are willing to give.

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Progress through training.

THE PROBLEMS OF CHILD LABOUR

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In this year of the child, various aspects of life as they affect children have been examined and considered by interested bodies and institutions. Discussion appears to have centred around nutrition, health and education since these are the primary needs of life. But perhaps not enough consideration has been given to child labour[1] in developing countries. It is the intention of this paper to take a close look at working children in Africa today, the specific areas where they are predominant, the extent of exploitation, the legal measures which exist to prevent this, and possible measures to safeguard their interests.

In countries where there is compulsory education until the age of 15 or 16 years, the extent of exploitation of children who are in part-time employment is less severe. But even so, many instances of exploitation in terms of gross underpayment, inadequate protection against accidents, etc. have been revealed.[2]

Many countries in Africa have not yet the resources to offer free primary education and therefore it is not compulsory. In some countries, the first few years are made available free, but unfortunately all children of primary-school age are not able to avail themselves of this education due to a lack of enough schools, teachers and often because the schools are not within easy reach of the children. Children who belong to nomadic communities which are constantly on the move in search of water and other necessities of life, are beyond the reach of ordinary schools. Due to the migratory nature of their life-style, the question of attending school on a regular basis simply does not arise in their case.

According to recent ILO estimates,[3] only a third of the children in the 5-14 year old age group are in fact admitted into schools. There is a large proportion of drop-outs and attendance is irregular. The general picture that emerges appears to be a very grim one for school children in the rural areas. There is a lack of adequate facilities in schools; children often have to walk long distances to get to school and no food is available to them while they are in school. As many of the children have not had the opportunity to attend a nursery school or any form of pre-school training, they are not "school-ready" when they begin their schooling. When they finish their years of free education, they are barely on the threshold of literacy, without any hope of following it up at a later stage.

It must be said at the outset that there is a very definite link between compulsory education and admission to employment. As soon as it becomes necessary to pay for children to continue at school, those families who cannot afford to pay have no alternative but to withdraw their children, and inevitably the child begins to participate in some activity which assists his family economically.

At the 57th Session of the ILO Conference in Geneva a large number of countries in Africa adopted a minimum age for admission to employment in industry. Most countries accepted the principle that as a long-term goal there should be some legal provision prohibiting children from entering the workforce generally before reaching a certain minimum age.

In Burundi, Congo (Brazzaville), Zaire, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia, the legal minimum age is above 14 years.[4] In Algeria it is 13 years; in Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic and UAR it is 12 years. The basic standards, however, are subject to many exceptions. The minimum age restriction does not apply to approved and supervised work in technical schools or in the case of vocational training through employment, nor does it apply to light work like running errands, domestic work, gardening, picking flowers, drying fish, shining shoes, etc. Further it also does not apply to some other kinds of work provided they do not affect health, moral well-being and attendance at school.

The competent minister or government service is empowered to make provision as an exception to the above in some countries, but it would appear that these powers have never been exercised to allow children to work in industries.

International labour standards have been accepted especially in the case of underground work in mines and quarries, the lifting of heavy weights, industrial painting which requires the use of white lead and work which exposes the children to ionising radiation. In this case generally the minimum age limit is higher than that of industrial work.

In the case of employment which is regarded as hazardous like work involving explosives, smoke, gas, toxic materials or exposure to unreasonably high quantities of dust, cleaning of machinery in motion, the use of power saws, drills and crushers, work on scaffoldings or in slaughterhouses or work near blast furnaces, dangerous electrical equipment or inadequately guarded machinery the minimum age is 16 years. But in the case of a few countries it has been fixed at 18 years.

It may be noted here that these provisions are necessary in an industrialised country. But only a few of these provisions are really significant in the majority of the countries in Africa, as they are not as advanced in industries as yet.

The supervision of children in non-industrial employment is not so strictly regulated. A few African countries have in fact adopted a minimum age for employment in the agricultural sector. Burundi, Congo (Brazzaville), Zaire, Gabon, Ghana and Somalia have a minimum age for employment in agriculture higher than 14 years.

Maritime and inland navigation is not sufficiently developed to require a close examination. But it is desirable to look at the conditions of employment of children who work on small family-run boats and vessels in the fisheries and coastal trades.

Stricter enforcement of these laws would certainly reduce exploitation of children who work, especially in industries.[5]

Recent ILO estimates reveal that there are in Africa 9.7 million children who are "economically active".[6] Ninety-five per cent of these children who are "economically active" are unpaid family workers, mainly in agriculture or small-scale industries, in quasi-family undertakings, in petty commerce or street trade.[7]

These figures are very significant. The bulk of working children is located within the family structure, as unpaid workers, whether tending to cattle or crops, harvesting, keeping the birds away from newly planted seeds and other like activities. In the case of girls, in addition, they also help with baby-minding, fetching water and firewood and cooking. These children are working out of sheer necessity. Apart from the need to contribute to the family in this way, it is very much in keeping with the African tradition which considers it an essential part of their socialisation, as noted by Oppong (Ghana) and Schildkrout (Nigeria), in their studies.

No one could deny that children should not become workers from a young age, and it is universally accepted that they have a right to education, good health and prospects of employment in adulthood. To apply and enforce strict legal standards of minimum age for employment (as in industry), for example, would serve no purpose. Social evils can never be legislated away. In so doing, the hardships suffered by them will merely be compounded. Clearly, these children are at work not because they are exploited but because they are victims of poverty.

Instead of suggesting remedies for the problem of child labour by separating the child from the family, it is necessary to look at the needs of the family as a whole and provide help to the child within that context, since the majority of children are working within the family unit. A different approach is needed for a child earning a wage outside the family, as it is here that a real danger of exploitation exists. Safeguards are needed to inspect, regulate and supervise their working conditions.

Just as children work within the family enterprises because of economic reasons, they also work because of social restrictions imposed on women as revealed in a Study in Kano, Nigeria, by E. Schildkrout. It was discovered that social and religious sanctions prevented the women from going out personally to sell their wares, generally finger-foods cooked by them. The only way they could earn a little money was by sending their children out on to the streets to sell on their behalf. Emancipation of these women would certainly help to keep some of these children off the streets and attend to their homework after school.

There is a dire need for rapid expansion of schools - free education, which is integrated and geared to the actual local needs of the people. An education system which results in alienating the youth from its environment brings its own new problems.

As an interim measure perhaps voluntary organisations could provide vocational training which could lead to reasonably well-paid jobs. The NGOs could play a very significant part here and, together with welfare services, support governments in creating a bridge until compulsory school education for all the children becomes a reality. The question of informal education as a stop-gap should be given careful thought.

Labour unions could also contribute by championing the cause of working children, whenever they are part of the workforce legally and are being exploited by unscrupulous employers who are grossly underpaying them or are subjecting them to undesirable working conditions.

There is a Swahili saying in Kenya, Mtoto unleavyo ndivyo akuavyo, which means the child will be what you raise him to be.

Control and supervision of working children is essential to prevent exploitation where it exists. But this is only a short-term policy. In the long run, a society should be created where children need never work to the detriment of their health, education and well-being.

Notes

[1] Children up to the age of 16 years.

[2] See E. Mendelievich: "Italy" (Geneva, ILO), p. 99 (on child labour).

[3] ILO: Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, International Labour Conference, 57th Session, Geneva, 1972, Report IV(1), p. 20.

[4] Ibid.

[5] See Anti-Slavery Society for Protection of Human Rights: Child Labour in Morocco's Carpet Industry (London, 1978): In spite of legislation prohibiting it, girls as young as 8 years old were found to be working in a large carpet factory.

See also A. Collaway: Nigerian Enterprises and the Employment of Youth, Monograph Series No. 2 (Ibadan, Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1973).

[6] Yearbook of Labour Statistics (Geneva, ILO, 1975).

[7] See also G. Rodgers and G. Standing: "The economic roles of children in low-income countries", Working Paper No. 81 (Geneva, ILO, 1979), pp. 4-5.

MEASURES FOR THE PROTECTION AND CARE OF CHILDREN WHOSE PARENTS ARE EMPLOYED OUTSIDE THE HOME

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Within Africa, particularly in the urban areas, the care and protection of working parents' children has become an increasing dilemma both from the viewpoint of the families concerned as well as of the larger society. The problem is an imposing one if the basic issue is simply one of providing minimum care and protection for large and growing numbers of children. But the task becomes even more imposing if a quality as well as a quantity dimension is considered: that is, the issue is not solely one of providing custodial care during the work day, but rather one of providing an environment which nurtures the full intellectual and physical development of the child.

Generally, in Africa's rural areas, working mothers have relatively few child-care problems as there is either no separation of home and workplace, or because of the nature of the work, mothers can bring their babies to the workplace (E. Fapohunda, 1979). In addition, female members of the extended family, particularly grandmothers, play a supportive role in sharing child-rearing responsibilities within a compound, or at times children are sent to live in the compounds of other members of the extended family, a form of voluntary fostering.

In urban centres, African mothers determined to work outside the home, find that traditional child-care institutions are disappearing with few new satisfactory alternatives appearing. Women working in the urban modern sector, rigidly follow fixed work-day routines and must leave their children at home for long periods of time. The situation is further aggravated by poor urban transportation facilities. At the same time, urban families, being physically separated from their home towns and extended families, find that the duties of child rearing are being restricted to the immediate family. Grandmothers or other older relatives are unwilling to leave familiar surroundings for a crowded, strange, urban existence. At times, rural relatives, hoping to improve their children's life prospects, send them to live in their urban relative's homes. These working children help to take care of their relation's children while perhaps receiving some educational or vocational training. However, as African governments are enlarging the opportunities of subsidised or free education, this alternative becomes less attractive.

At the same time that the requirements of women's non-domestic work in the cities have been changing and the supportive child-care assistance of the extended family has been withering, the traditional rural family division of labour with the wife assuming the primary responsibility for the daily care of home and children has not been altered significantly. As a result, working mothers are forced to compete in the labour market for paid domestic help. The paid help is often young, inexperienced and unreliable.

African urban mothers are confronted with the growing problem of finding some child-care arrangement for their offspring at a non-prohibitive cost. As the number of women with some education who want to work and who need household help is increasing, while the number of unemployed domestics is increasing slowly if not declining, domestics' wages are rising and labour turnover is high. As economic development proceeds, the rising wage trend will be accentuated by more government provided school opportunities and a growing number of employment alternatives offering fewer working hours if not higher wages. As a result, in some urban centres like Lagos, Nigeria, working mothers are either leaving their older children at home alone, or are turning to small-scale commercial businesses, largely unregulated by government institutions, to take care of their children. At times, children as young as 1 year old are being sent to boarding nursery schools with their parents only visiting them on weekends. Increasingly urban children are being denied proper supervision in adequate facilities; thereby exposing them to health and physical safety hazards as well as depriving them of adequate training. In addition, many children do not have adequate meals during the working day.

Before considering the various governmental approaches for dealing with the child-care problem, it is important to point out that children should not be classified into one homogeneous group as their physical and emotional needs vary with their age. Therefore, what constitutes an adequate programme and its relevant costing would also vary with the age group considered. For discussion purposes, it is useful to divide children into three age groups:

(1) infants 6 months to 3 years of age;

(2) pre-primary school children 3 to 6 years of age;

(3) school age children 6 to 12 years of age who need care during their out-of-school hours.

The large-scale care of infants particularly poses special problems as it is thought that they need a highly personalised individual relationship with an adult in a stimulating environment for proper intellectual and emotional development (D. Boguslawski, 1975:22). The equipment and staff needs of such a programme tend to be more costly than for other groups of children.

Government policies towards child care may range along a continuum from a position of almost total indifference to a substantial assumption of parental responsibility. The position a government may take in this regard is a reflection of the socio-political values of the country, the economic system as well as economic restraints.

At one extreme of this policy continuum, the government may declare that the protection of the child and the promulgation of his welfare is the primary responsibility of the family. However, the government may be prepared to protect children from extreme cases of parental neglect and abuse. The agents of the government may also be prepared to provide substitute care when full-time care outside the parental home becomes necessary for the well-being of the child, or if the parents are unable to effectively exercise parental supervision and control.

It is, therefore, left to the parents to make suitable arrangements for child care if they both work outside the home. It is implicitly assumed that if a demand for child-care services outside the home exists, market forces, directed by the profit motive, will assure their availability. It is the sole responsibility of parents as consumers of child-care services to investigate and evaluate the alternative arrangements available in the market place. The government basically assumes a "laissez-faire" approach to child care and protection.

A second position along the policy continuum involves the government recognising that it has a responsibility for safeguarding the well-being of children who are being cared for in institutions outside the home, while still not actively encouraging the development of, or supplying, child-care services. Basically, the government realises that if children are mistreated or placed in dangerous circumstances so as to adversely affect their physical or mental well-being, it imposes a long-term social cost which the community as a whole, as well as the immediate family, will have to bear. Also, it is recognised that individual parents as child-care consumers may be unable to ascertain the minimum requirements in such areas as building, safety or health measures to protect their individual child. Moreover, individual parents acting alone may not be able to insist on improved conditions in a particular facility because of excess demand for available space, or the existence of such general conditions in all commercial facilities. At times, proprietors of child-care institutions out of ignorance rather than cost-consciousness may not provide an adequate facility or establish suitable requirements for admission. Government, therefore, could initiate a licensing law and programme applicable to individuals, organisations or institutions that care for or educate children in groups. Licensing standards may cover the following major areas (D. Boguslawski, 1975:10):

(1) building and fire safety;

(2) registration - number and ages of children to be accepted in relation to space;

(3) size, type and training of staff;

(4) health measures;

(5) furnishings, supplies and equipment;

(6) type of programme.

For licensing to be a constructive policy, there must be a dedicated licensing agency, supported by public opinion, with a trained staff to adequately interpret the standards and to help institutions to meet these requirements. But a licensing programme can only give parents and the community some assurance that children are not being exploited or harmed; it cannot ensure that children get the best possible care.

As a third policy alternative, governments can attempt to influence the number and quality of child service institutions by sponsoring or supporting institutions run by various non-profit agencies, without the government itself being involved with ownership and administration. These agencies may be voluntary agencies, co-operative societies, trade unions, or employers themselves.

Several motivations may be behind such a programme. The government may recognise that the child upon birth is an individual with basic human rights instead of being viewed as an appendage of his parents. The government, therefore, can undertake a sponsorship programme to develop and protect these rights. Or the government may recognise that because of changing socio-economic conditions, adults are finding it more difficult to perform well the role of parent and need help. Or the government may be concerned with the fuller utilisation of women's productive capacities as part of a national development effort as it is investing large sums of money in the education of both sexes. In addition, policy makers may be concerned that the benefits of economic development are evenly distributed between the sexes. If child-care related problems increase the cost to employers of hiring female labour, relative to male labour, women's modern-sector employment gains are likely to be modest and the income distributoon between the sexes to become more skewed over time. Or public pressure may force the government to play a more positive role.

Government sponsorship and support of non-profit child-care facilities may take a variety of forms including:

(1) government provision of technical support and advice;

(2) government help in reducing capital costs of programmes by:

  (a) leasing state lands to non-profit agencies at minimal expense or providing space in public facilities such as markets and industrial parks;

  (b) guaranteeing bank loans for building purposes, thereby reducing interest charges and making loans more generally available;

  (c) permitting employers on their income tax to write off the physical plant costs of child-care facilities as depreciation;

  (d) making available to co-operative societies special low interest loans through the co-operative banking system;

(3) government help in reducing recurrent operating costs by:

  (a) making specific contributions to programmes such as subsidised food programmes or a public health nurse visitation programme;

  (b) reducing costs to employers of day-care programmes by allowing them to deduct on their income tax child-care centre costs as a business expense;

  (c) reducing duties on educational materials and equipment;

(4) government can help encourage the professionalisation of child-care services by:

  (a) establishing training programmes perhaps with the assistance of voluntary agencies for child-care teachers and also establishing a licensing programme;

  (b) organising a good professional labour exchange programme to help child-care centres locate appropriate personnel.

At the furthest end of the policy continuum, the government can directly provide child-care services through institutions like state crèches or within the facilities of state-owned enterprises. These facilities may be financed entirely by state resources or involve, to some degree, parental contributions.

As was the case with government sponsorship of child-care facilities, there may be very different motivations behind such an approach depending on the country context. In one case, the government may undertake such programmes primarily because of a social welfare orientation, that is, the government realises that the majority of the population cannot afford child-care services offered by profit-making institutions. In another case, the government may be interested in encouraging women's employment during a war-time effort, or as part of a development programme. Or the government may be interested in changing traditional family structures or inculcating certain social values.

All of these governmental approaches for child-care delivery have their relative advantages and disadvantages based on the criteria used for selection and their relative importance. These criteria may include the following:

(1) general availability of child-care services provided within a time context;

(2) quality of child-care services delivered;

(3) relative cost to the family and to the community of child-care services;

(4) short- and long-term economic feasibility of the approach;

(5) general political and social acceptability.

For example, the advantages of market-provided child-care services with some government regulation include a quick response to a growing demand for child-care services and the limited need for government's extensive investment of its scarce resources. Facilities are also likely to be provided within short distances from homes. But proprietors motivated by profits may, in situations in excess demand, charge unduly high fees or provide extremely minimal facilities and services.

In comparison, child-care services provided by voluntary groups with some government sponsorship or support would provide better quality programmes at a lower cost to parents, but perhaps with a greater time lag. In addition, parents would have a greater voice in the formulation of policies concerning the operation of centres particularly those run by co-operatives. Moreover, the child-care facility may be part of a larger more comprehensive mother-child welfare programme. For example, a programme based in a public market facility may include a health clinic and sanitary food canteen as well as an adult education programme.

An advantage of having large-scale employers provide child-care facilities at the workplace is that there is less separation of mothers and especially small children. Mothers can visit their children during breaks. This facilitates the nursing of babies which is desirable from a national health viewpoint. Ideally, the child-care facility should include a food service as well as a clinic staffed by a nursing sister with perhaps a visiting doctor arrangement. Children would have better medical attention, even of a preventative nature, and mothers would spend less time waiting in overcrowded public clinics. The programme would also be beneficial to employers as mothers, knowing that their children are well taken care of, would be more productive and less prone to absences from work. But the mothers would have to transport their children to their workplace. In cities like Lagos, Nigeria, this would mean that children would have to travel for long distances in inadequate urban public transport during early morning or late evening hours, thereby exposing them to safety risks. Moreover, as employer-provided child-care facilities would make the hiring of women's labour more expensive and thus discourage the growth of female employment opportunities, the community may have to bear part of the burden of the programme.

Finally, state-owned and operated child-care facilities perhaps could be provided on a more comprehensive basis and at a faster rate than those provided by voluntary associations. But such a programme would entail a heavy commitment of limited state resources. Also, the bureaucratic procedures of the government may involve higher operating costs and may produce less innovative programmes.

The provision of adequate care for children of working parents is not an easy task, particularly in a developing country with limited economic resources, competing development priorities and a large and growing population under the age of 16 years. On the national level, a few African governments have become concerned with the child-care issue, particularly in reference to women's employment problems. However, African governments are investing heavily in expanding their educational systems and making education more accessible to a larger proportion of the population with a view to encouraging economic development and promoting a more egalitarian distribution of its benefits. Given this commitment, it is unlikely that governments will be able to invest substantially in measures to take care of working parents' children. Generally, pre-primary education is not conceived of as being an integral part of a national education system. For example, in Nigeria the Implementation Committee for the National Policy on Education recommended that the government should not concern itself with the financing and management of pre-primary education, but rather that individuals, private voluntary organisations, employers of labour and communities could establish pre-primary schools. (Federal Republic of Nigeria, Implementation Committee for the National Policy on Education, 1978:8.) The Committee even suggested that large employers be obliged to do so under law.

Moreover, in Nigeria, the issue of pre-primary education is beginning to have increasing political overtones. To some, like Rotimi Badmus, a member of the Oyo State House of Assembly, nursery schools are privileged schools where children of the elite learn curricula (implied foreign) which are not "functional to the process of socialisation of the child" (Daily Times, 20 October 1979:II). Mr. Badmus further feels that government colleges and nursery schools "should be abolished in the conscious realisation that everybody must be given equal opportunity to develop his talents". By implication, to Mr. Badmus and others, nursery schools, private primary schools and selective government colleges are means by which the Nigerian elite are a self-perpetuating body. Obviously, such politicians do not appreciate that the growing child-care problem causes hardships to the general population of children. Perhaps then their views would be altered calling instead for an expansion of pre-primary institutions with a more indigenous orientation.

African non-governmental organisations, therefore, have a fourfold role to play in designing measures for the care and protection of working parents' children. First, they can act as the political voice of the children, a silent minority. Secondly, such organisations can be innovators of new programmes involving the mobilisation of community resources not previously used. Thirdly, they can execute programmes for the care of children. Fourthly, voluntary agencies can act as propagators of ideas and programmes for other non-governmental agencies.

Acting as the political lobby for children, voluntary agencies can encourage governments to be more aware of child-care problems and to make policy commitments. Specifically, such groups should insist that government initiates a programme for the licensing and supervision of profit-making child-care institutions as well as giving support for its effective execution. Moreover, government should be encouraged to declare itself the sponsor of non-profit child-care programmes and to delineate the areas of support. In the early stages of such an effort, government should be encouraged to act as an information clearing-house through the ministries of education and/or public welfare. Government should be encouraged to produce printed materials which would aid voluntary agencies in the design and execution of projects.

Moreover, trade unions particularly can play an active role in insisting on the need for child-care programmes in their dealings with government and private sector employers. After all, in many African countries, government is the largest modern sector employer. In discussions with employers or employers' associations over wages and working conditions, unions can insist that a child-care scheme is important for worker welfare and productivity and is a negotiable issue.

In a situation where the need for child care is substantial, while resources are limited, voluntary organisations, in trying to organise programmes, can act as innovators seeking new ways to mobilise community resources not previously tapped or fully utilised. For example, there may be existing facilities such as church buildings which are not used for substantial periods of time and can be used for children of a particular age group perhaps with minor alterations. Or aged people may be enlisted to serve as substitute grandparents for school-age children who need attention in after-school programmes. Or an agency or several agencies together can organise a fund-raising effort appealing to individuals to contribute on a new basis - perhaps to give a donation in memory of a departed relative. Agencies can also solicit the voluntary help of architects, builders, etc. Or voluntary groups, such as market women, can send their own members for training as child-care assistants so as to assume some responsibility for their own project. Or voluntary groups can require that parents who send their children to their facility contribute not only money but time to its support. Parents could help with building maintenance, the production of play items, etc., thereby helping to reduce costs.

As executors of child-care programmes, non-profit organisations should try to make their facilities available to families of different socio-economic groups. This may entail scaling fees to family income. Programmes should also have an indigenous orientation. In executing a project one agency may find that it lacks the necessary resources to undertake the project alone and may have to co-operate with another organisation. For example, an employer may provide the physical facilities for a child-care programme, while a trade union helps with the operating costs. Or an employers' association, rather than an individual employer, provides a child-care facility.

Finally, voluntary agencies, trade unions and employers can provide information and assistance based on their experience, to other groups considering similar projects. Often groups which are experiencing child-care difficulties are unaware how, through collective action, individual problems can be solved. Voluntary agencies can help bring suggestions to such groups of individuals.

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THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM VIOLENCE, ABUSE, BODILY HARM AND NEGLECT

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The present document does not purport to cover all the problems that could arise under such an important theme as the protection of children against violence, abuse, bodily harm and neglect. A detailed study of each of the points before you would require many months, if not many years, of study and research and go beyond the scope of this simple communication.

Hence, we shall limit ourselves to examining some of the key points likely to be of interest to participants and lead to positive contributions to the objective of the meeting.

We shall review successively:

(1) the various influences to which children are exposed: the family, the school, the public information media, as well as the possible impact of these influences on their future integration in the world of work;

(2) the origins and causes of violence, abuse, bodily harm, neglect, etc.;

(3) the consequences of certain of these practices on the child and on his active life;

(4) problems raised by the discussion of these subjects, and belonging to the cultural, religious or traditional context, for example, the problems of the excision of girls.

The influences to which children are exposed

The family

From the moment of birth the first influence exercised on the child is that of the family. The family is the basic cell of all societies. It is a form of organisation of individual life and, as such, is closely linked to the structure of society. Whatever might be its form of organisation, the family contributes in a very large measure to the development of the human personality. That is why it is considered the crucible in which the personality of the child takes shape.

In traditional African society the educational role falls, in the very first place, on the family, taken in its widest sense: father, mother, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, relatives and even simple friends. The birth of a child is always an important event which the community as a whole hails with joy. Gifts are presented to the mother: loin-cloths (to carry the child on the back), money (to buy soap for the diapers) and even gold when the child is a girl. Each member of the family does his best to coddle the child. Besides, from a young age, the child is subjected to the authority of everyone, principally of all those older than he. Each one will make it his duty to inculcate in him the moral principles which will make him a man (or a woman) of accomplishment: principles based on respect for oneself and for one's elders whoever they may be, respect for ancestors and traditions, devotion to work, honesty, love of God and of mankind. Just as the community greets with joy the coming into this world of each new member, so also it considers that it has a right and a duty towards this new member: the right to correct and the duty to educate him. In the traditional African family, the child belonged to everyone and everyone was responsible for his education. A simple passer-by had the right to scold and even punish the child if it behaved badly.

The positive aspect of this "communal" education was that the child, knowing that any adult could administer it a sound spanking if it misbehaved, would be very careful about its behaviour. The parents, on their side, could rest assured that wherever their child might be, there would always be someone to set it on the right path.

What influence could the traditional family have on the physical and mental development of the child and on its entry into working life?

In the traditional family system of Mali and, even today, in its rural areas, the division of labour is so organised that the child acquires the basic notions of the trade he will be called upon to ply later. Thus, little girls are initiated very early in life to the role of housewives: from the age of 8 they take part in rural work, learn to pound the millet, cook, and spin cotton. By the age of 10, they are fully conversant with all the techniques which go to make a good housewife. It is they who, with the other womenfolk of the household, do all the domestic chores, including fetching water and firewood. They participate in a very large measure in the production of consumer and other goods: the cultivation of fields of millet and corn as well as of the vegetable plot in the vicinity of the family concession, the upkeep of cattle and the poultry yard. They still find some time to help the men in their rural work. Finally, it is they who look after the marketing of produce.

The boys, too, learn very early the rudiments of a trade: in a blacksmith's family the boys are initiated into the craft at around the age of 8. They first learn to handle the bellows, and then, as they grow up, they are given progressively more complex tasks. They also go hunting, fishing and work in the fields with the adults.

As will be seen, the principal objective of the education that is given to the child in the traditional family environment is to prepare him for a profession in life. It should be noted that this "apprenticeship" includes education in the traditions and customs of the community.

During the vigils often organised after the harvests, the tales and legends that were told to children had an undeniable moral value. Each tale was a lesson in morality which the child had no difficulty in assimilating.

The child was therefore brought up in a healthy climate, where he learnt in a simple way the facts of life. His physical and mental development generally suffered no damage.

Seen from a purely African point of view, this form of upbringing presents more than one advantage in preparing the child for working life:

(1) Subjected to a certain family discipline, he will not have much difficulty in adapting himself to the discipline which the proper exercise of any profession requires.

(2) The taste for a job well done inculcated in him from a young age will make of him a conscientious worker.

(3) Finally, community life and the respect for his elders will facilitate his future relations with his superiors and workmates.

One may accuse a child, brought up according to the traditional rules, of lacking in mental liveliness. But this shortcoming is often overcome in the course of schooling about which we shall say more further on.

The combined efforts of the members of the family community should have contributed to ensuring a sound physical and mental development of the child.

What happens when the family milieu is not in a position to assume its responsibilities?

The child, deprived of effective guidance, is exposed to a whole series of more or less harmful influences, likely to affect his physical and mental equilibrium. The examples range from the child whose parents are alcoholics, divorced or deceased, to the children at some Koranic schools.

In traditional Malian society, the death of the head of the family was not, as it is today, a reason for breaking up the family. When such a misfortune befell, the mother was not obliged to quit the family, abandoning her children. One of the brothers of the deceased married the widow or widows and looked after the children; thus the family was not broken up and the children continued to receive the same education as during their father's lifetime. Even today this practice survives in certain little developed regions. But it is tending to disappear with the new generation which for various reasons, economic amongst them, is not very much in favour of the large traditional family. Thus, it often happens that when the father of the family dies or becomes an alcoholic, the children, deprived of guidance and affection, soon become delinquents. For the majority of developing countries, we are not yet in a position to estimate the precise number of children who are in prison or interned because deprived too soon of the family guidance which they greatly needed. But the problem undoubtedly exists and the services in charge of juvenile delinquency (the "brigade des moeurs" in Mali) have for a long time been warning people about its gravity. The number of children or adolescents arrested for theft or interned for taking or peddling drugs and for whom the chances of a return to normal working life have become negligible is legion.

The school

The school, being the place where, apart from his family home, the child passes the greatest part of his time, its influence on the personality of the child should not be underestimated. It is quite natural that, from a certain age, the parents should entrust a part of their educational role to the school teacher.

As everyone knows, the school teacher and particularly the first one, is a person who occupies an important place in the life of the young pupil. He or she is the first outsider charged not only with his instruction but also with the task of inculcating in him the civic and moral virtues without which it would be difficult for him (or for her) to become a deserving citizen.

From the very commencement of his school life, the school teacher becomes, in the eyes of the child, a superior being whom he admires and practically venerates. He is feared and respected; few pupils would dare to disobey him. In short, he becomes the symbol and the model which each of his pupils will strive to imitate. It is a veritable cult of the personality. With certain students, the phenomenon goes even further: their admiration for their teacher is such that they decide to follow the same profession. This means that the influence of the teacher, and of the school in general, is such that the vocation of teacher is decided upon from a very young age.

It is true that, in the old days, teachers showed themselves worthy of the respect and admiration which their students, and even the population at large, bestowed on them. Thanks to their courage, their selflessness and their sense of duty, the children entrusted to their care "made good" as the saying goes. Unfortunately, this tradition was not always followed by the next generation. We note today that both parents and teachers have abdicated from their obligations and their duties as educators and guides.

The former will not accept that a child who has erred, even gravely, should be subjected to the slightest corporal punishment. The latter allow an unconscionable familiarity to be established between them and their students, going to the extent of smoking in their company or worse, to flirt with them (the girls) quite openly. Now, everyone will agree that without good teachers there can be neither good schools nor good pupils.

We have here a real situation. The child encounters less and less the moralising influences which could help him to correct his shortcomings and curb his bad instincts. He is practically left to himself and at the mercy of all the influences harmful to his physical, moral and mental development, and which could jeopardise his adult working life.

And what, might one ask, are the causes of this new situation?

It must be recognised that they are multiple. Hence, we shall only refer to the most important ones.

The evolution of social structures, in general, the various movements in favour of freedom and the emancipation of the young, which demand that children be given rights which they are not always mature enough to exercise wisely. But, in our opinion, there is another fact which should not be lost sight of: if the school teachers of the old days distinguished themselves by their intellectual and moral calibre, they also needed, on occasion, to be more or less severe so as to assert their authority and fulfil their role of educators and trainers.

Exactions and violence were accordingly perpetrated against children by irascible and choleric teachers. Corporal punishments (whipping, the pillory, privation and various other abuses) were permitted at the time. Some teachers (fortunately very few) took advantage of this to give rein to their sadistic instincts. I shall only cite as proof a case which occurred in a small village in my country in the 1950s. A school teacher, in order to punish a bad student, beat him mercilessly and then tied a rope round his waist. Holding the other end of the rope, he ordered the child to run. And while the child ran, the teacher would pull the rope violently every now and then so that the child fell on his back. After some hours of this brutal game the child died from multiple fractures and haemorrhage.

This gruesome story is unfortunately true. It is certainly the most abject case of violence I have known exercised against as innocent a being as a child.

From the colonial days until the abolition of corporal punishment in schools, assassinations of this type unfortunately took place in my country, perpetrated by African school teachers, against innocent victims whose only crime was of not excelling in a language which was not their own.

It often happened that students, haunted by the violence to which they were subjected at school, had no other alternative but to run away. They would not have anything more to do with schools which they had left prematurely to live a miserable life in their villages or swell the ranks of the unemployed in the towns.

Witnessing these excesses the parents ended up by revolting and demanded the abolition of corporal punishment in the schools.

This was the best thing that they could do. It was absolutely necessary to protect children against all types of violence which could, in one way or another, compromise their future.

The public information media

Today, crime literature and the cinema have replaced the tales and fables which, as we said earlier, had a moral value. They serve as benchmarks for the child's own individual and social behaviour. The child tends to identify himself with the hero of the film or the novel, the tough outlaw without mercy.

The craftiness and amoral behaviour of some of these heroes make them appear, in the eyes of the children, as extraordinary beings whom they hasten to imitate in their clothes, their stride and their bearing. Others go to the extent of adopting the name of the hero.

Certain violent films, such as films about karate or gangsters, have a disastrous effect on the behaviour of children. It is from them that children learn to have fights of incredible violence, at school, at home or in the street. It is films again that teach our children how to break open a safe, rob a bank or pilfer a purse.

It should be noted that boys are more prone to be influenced by novels and films than girls. The cinema halls are packed every evening with the jobless who, in their inability to find work, discover a trick or two in the films to help them to make a living.

In these circumstances, we cannot but deplore the fact that our cinema halls too often show bad films which cannot have any good effect on the mentality and morality of our children. Detective literature of doubtful taste has replaced the tales of the bush and the forest, the fairy tales of Perrault and other healthy reading which were the joy of our youth 20 years ago.

We are entitled to ask ourselves a question: should we give in to the power of money and reconcile ourselves to seeing the future of our children jeopardised by these by-products of literature and cinema?

Religion

To a very great extent, religion can also profoundly mark the personality of the child. The first religious notions are generally inculcated in the child by the family. In the Moslem family, from the age of 6, the child is sent to the Koranic school where the marabout teaches him the Koran and the dogma of Islam. Thus he learns to know God, to love Him and to love his neighbour and to fear His wrath. He is also taught to distinguish between good and evil, to develop a sense of duty and honesty. The marabout teaches him the verses of the Koran, which he must know by heart and recite with his prayers. These prayers, as one knows, call for a certain discipline as they have to be said at least five times a day.

At home his father and mother teach him to put into practice the teachings of the marabout.

A child brought up according to the precepts of Islam will have no difficulty in integrating himself in the working world which, today, calls for so much courage, abnegation, sense of duty and respect for others. The same is true for all other religions. To take only the example of Christianity, it has been found that, generally speaking, former seminarists very often make very good workers, with all the qualities that this implies.

Finally, religion has almost always a positive influence on the physical and mental development of the child and on his personal and social behaviour. This influence cannot but help him to integrate smoothly into working life.

Origins and causes of violence, abuse, bodily harm and neglect

Children have, in fact, never been able to escape the violence of men. From the earliest times, they have been, the often innocent, and almost always helpless, victims of the cruelty of adults. History contains numerous, particularly wartime examples, of this; when a village is taken, the population is massacred without pity, men, women, children and the aged. No one is spared.

Even today violence and abuses continue to be perpetrated against children. I will not cite the countries where children are arrested and thrown into prison, tortured for hours, murdered individually or massacred collectively. The list would be too long. No one here ignores that such is the current practice in many countries. Amnesty International has published enough heartrending reports which the newspapers have reproduced and which show to what extent the rights of man, and particularly those of children, are trampled underfoot. One can only deplore this fact particularly at a time when the whole world is observing the International Year of the Child.

Certain traditional customs are at the origin of bodily harm to children. We are referring to various mutilations such as the circumcision or excision of girls and other related practices, tattooing, etc., which continue to be practised in Africa and, to a lesser extent, in some Arab countries and a part of Asia.

In Africa, female circumcision is current in numerous regions. Such is the case of Guinea, Mali, Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia.

The origins

No one knows for a fact the origins of excision. What is known is that it has been practised since time immemorial. Some have tried to explain the origin of this custom in terms of religious or other beliefs.

In reality, excision is chiefly practised in countries converted to Islam. However, it cannot have its origins in the Moslem religion for the simple reason that the Koran does not enjoin it and that most of the countries of the Arabian peninsula have abandoned it.

Its origins have to be sought elsewhere. Beliefs, traditional customs and social values seem to us to be the essential driving elements which have perpetuated this practice up to now. One should not forget that circumcision, whether male or female, is always accompanied by a whole series of ceremonial rites. In Mali, for example, in certain regions, it was practised during puberty, generally just before the young people married (girls or boys between 14 and 18 years of age). The ritual ceremonies often began a week in advance. The heads of the young people were shaved and amulets were produced which the children had to wear until they were completely healed. This was meant to protect them against evil spells.

A vigil with songs and rejoicing was organised and at dawn the operation was performed in the greatest secrecy, in the bush for the boys, in the toilets for the girls.

One may suppose that the aim of the circumcision was to sacrifice a part of one's body to the deity of fertility so as to receive her favours.

The excision of girls, on the other hand, is justified in certain cultural groups by other reasons:

Some invoke hygienic reasons, claiming that a girl who has been excised has less problems of intimate cleanliness than one who has not. This, of course, remains to be proved.

Another reason, this time unavowed, is that the ablation of a part of the female genitals diminished her sensitiveness, thus helping (or obliging) her to be a serious girl (while she was still a spinster) and faithful woman (once she was married). Opinions are divided on this, as some women maintain that excision has no effect on female sensitiveness.

As can be seen, the excision of girls has no serious justification. It only stems from ancient beliefs and customs which may continue God alone knows for how long. Children (now the operation being performed generally between the age of 8 days and 8 years) continue to be subjected to these customs which we do not hesitate to call barbarous taking into account their baneful consequences on the health and sometimes on the life of children.

The other forms of bodily harm (tattooing and scarification) whose origins are better known, are fortunately tending to disappear.

The scarifications

Scarifications are often linked with the ethnic origins of populations.

In Mali, one can distinguish the different groups by the tattoo marks which they bear on their bodies and, more generally, on their faces. For example, the Soninke, of the first region, bear large scarred gashes on their temples. Their women, in addition to these scars, bear tattooed designs on their lips, their cheeks and along a straight line going from the top of the nose to the top of the forehead.

The Bobos can be distinguished by the small scars they bear on the face and on the trunk (from the chest to just below the navel and all over the back).

Certain families, generally noble, had adopted a type of slash practised on the child while it was young and which permitted it to be identified later, for example, in the event of war, if it was taken prisoner or enslaved.

The tattooing of women and girls was often prompted by aesthetic reasons (particularly the tattooing of the lips). But, with the evolution of the modern world, these practices are fortunately tending to disappear.

Children are subjected to other forms of maltreatment which are inadmissible in our progressive world. We shall take up here one aspect of the burning problem of neglect. We have already seen, in the preceding pages, the role which family, school, religion play in the education of the child, the influence they can have on his physical and mental development and on his integration into working life.

One of the big problems of our society is precisely the fact that family, school and religion which once constituted sure values have become shaky. In traditional Africa, the school not only gave the child instruction but it also inculcated in him the great moral values which would make of him an honest, hard-working, conscientious and upright citizen.

Today, the heads of large families, absorbed as they are by the multiple problems of daily life, can no longer find time to educate their children. Furthermore, apart from the fact that the moral authority of the school teacher has become theoretical, the overcrowding of classes puts a brake on the very exercise of this authority. The teacher thus watches, powerless or indifferent, the deterioration of the child who will probably end up by swelling the ranks of juvenile delinquents.

Another form of abandonment of the child consists in the father handing over his son to a marabout with a view to his being given a complete Koranic instruction. The child is thus abandoned to his new master who can take him anywhere he likes including abroad. This type of teaching can sometimes last 10 or even 15 years. During this time, the child, completely cut off from his family, is at the mercy of his master. The tragic aspect of the problem is that the marabout does not have the means to feed all the pupils placed under his care. He therefore sends them out to beg in the streets, to collect their pittance, and bring back money and foodstuffs. It is these unfortunate boys who assail you in the streets. In addition, they are compelled to do heavy chores for the wife of the marabout: fetch water and firewood, pound the millet, sweep and clean, etc.

The worst of it is that the master fixes a certain sum of money and a quantity of foodstuffs which they must bring home every day, under pain of punishment. As the master cannot even feed his pupils, it is out of the question that he should clothe them or look after them when they fall ill. As a result, many of them die of illness or undernourishment, far from their families, who often ignore their existence for years on end.

The consequences of violence, abuse, bodily harm and neglect on the child and their impact on his integration into working life

It is impossible, within the framework of this paper, to analyse all the consequences of the above practices on the development of the child. We shall therefore limit ourselves to touching upon some of them, particularly those linked with the excision of girls and with neglect.

We have already seen that excision is an operation involving the removal of the sensitive part of the external genitalia (the clitoris) of young girls. This operation can take various forms: simple ablation or ablation accompanied by profound mutilation of the big and small labia. In the course of healing, the scar closes the orifice of the vagina leaving just enough space for urinating.

One can imagine the atrocious suffering inflicted on a child that is thus mutilated without the slightest anaesthesia and in precarious hygienic conditions. In Mali, the operation is always performed by female practicians of the blacksmith caste. They use a sort of penknife which is not disinfected before use. The wound is treated with applications of oils, powders and ablutions of various kinds.

The dangers faced by the patient are great: risk of haemorrhage, to which many succumb, and danger of various types of infection (particularly tetanus). Finally, the operation can have a grave traumatic effect on the child, particularly when it is performed between the age of 7 and 10. Lively, gay, dynamic little girls have been known to lose their power of speech for days, as well as their vivacity, to become amorphous and complete idiots. These are some of the immediate consequences which when they do not endanger the life of the child, seriously handicap her future and jeopardise all her chances of becoming a normal woman.

The long-term consequences, once adulthood is reached, include: difficulty in giving birth, with profound tearing of organs and many other accidents which doctors and midwives know well. These repercussions on health result in many days' hospitalisation.

In Mali, the midwives and gynaecologists, while admitting that excisions are the cause of tearing at the moment of childbirth, maintain that they do not lead to incapacity for work. Many explanations can be given for this: the Malian woman has great capacity for endurance. Little habituated to medicines, she recovers quickly with the first antibiotics administered. Another reason is that few women, who have undergone this operation, work outside the home. Hence, the number of working women to whom such accidents can occur is very small and they generally recover before the end of their maternity leave.

Finally, if there are few cases of grave accidents to women as a result of incision, involving several weeks in hospital, it is because the operation performed in Mali is simple ablation. Hence, if there is any rending at the moment of childbirth, it occurs upwards; hence it does not go very far.

Such are some of the consequences of the circumcision of girls.

As regards neglect, its consequences are no doubt less brutal but they can be just as tragic. We have already spoken of the precarious conditions of living of children entrusted to the care of marabouts; when they survive malnutrition and illness, it is often only to become juvenile delinquents. Used to fending for themselves, they end up as thieves and inevitably in prison.

When the family and school environment no longer fulfil their educational role, the child faced similar dangers. The baneful consequences of wasted schooling in terms of the recrudescence of juvenile delinquency hardly need to be demonstrated. At present, in Mali, the State is no longer able to bear single-handed the cost of schooling for all children and the financial contribution which is requested of the parents is too heavy for their slender budgets. Thus, many parents choose not to send their children to school at all or are only too happy to interrupt their schooling. All these rejected children are an easy prey to drug peddlers and pimps.

Problems raised by the discussion of the subjects and falling within a cultural, religious or traditional context

It is not easy to discuss questions whose origins are as deeply rooted in the human mentality as are customs or traditions.

Let us take the example of the excision of girls. It is a custom which, in our opinion, has no religious origin even though it is chiefly practised in essentially Islamic countries. Rather, it is an ancient practice attached to a particular cultural milieu. People conform to it out of fear of social ostracism. Few people, and in particular those directly concerned, attempt to question the practice, much less combat it.

The first of many difficulties is the taboo generally surrounding the sujject. No one wishes to discuss it. For men, it is a matter for women, which is true in so far as it is women who orchestrate the ritual around the practice, from the ceremonial rites down to the operation itself. But it is difficult to raise the subject even with women. Only young women, usually intellectuals, dare to break the ban, discuss the problem amongst themselves and even refuse to submit their daughters to this mutilation. They sometimes succeed. But at what price? Those who have watched helplessly their first daughter die of haemorrhage after the grandmother or an aunt had had her excised without their knowledge are too numerous to be counted. Only young women who have gone through such tragedies dare to oppose this barbarous custom openly.

How can one convince the people to get rid of these practices?

Our soundings show that the solution to the problem is not round the corner. But it must be found. Those principally concerned, the women themselves, should realise the dangers and join in the search for a remedy.

Conclusions

Since its creation, the International Labour Organisation has striven to improve the conditions of life of workers. To this effect, it has adopted several international Conventions such as Conventions Nos. 5, 10, 33, 59 (Revised), 60, 112 and 123, on minimum age, and Conventions Nos. 6, 78, 79 and 90, on night work of children and on the medical examination of adolescents (in non-industrial employment).

Numerous States have ratified these Conventions or taken steps to bring their legislation in line with their provisions.

It is thus that the Labour Code of Mali devotes a chapter to the work of women and children.

It is forbidden to employ children in tasks which exceed their strength or involve risks or are likely to endanger their morals.

As regards minimum age, children may not be employed in any enterprise, not even as apprentices, before the age of 14.

Finally, they may not be employed in the oiling, inspection, cleaning or repair of machines, or mechanisms, in motion. Similarly, they may not be employed in the production or sale of writings, printed material, posters or other objects, the sale or display of which is prohibited by the penal legislation as being contrary to good morals.

Our traditions certainly have their good side. We are obliged to recognise that some of our customs (the initiation and, up to a point, even the circumcision of boys) were aimed at making a man out of the adolescent by putting him through difficult tests which he had to pass without wincing.

Our elders surely drew from these practices the strength, the courage, and the endurance which have always characterised their generation.

A child brought up according to the African tradition, who has gone in a normal way through school, the seminary or the Koranic school (under the supervision of the parents) rarely becomes a social outcast. He was sheltered from all the things that are the joy of present-day youth: easy life, films depicting crime or violence, alcohol, drugs and debauchery. The principal aim of his education having been to teach him to earn an honest living, he will not have much trouble in acquiring the training required for the profession of his choice.

Now what do we see among modern youth? An almost total absence of moral values, as a consequence of the abdication of duties by parents and teachers.

As for religion, it holds little interest for his excessively rationalistic spirit.

Without regarding all these young people as delinquents, it must be recognised, in the case of most of them, that no one bothered to teach them a sense of sacrifice and a respect for laws. How, in these circumstances, will their integration into the working world be brought about?

We think that it is urgent that parents and teachers should resume the dialogue and seek to check the regrettable propensities towards which our youth is drifting.

But there is no question of resorting to the old violent methods to put our children back on the right path. We condemn all educational methods or other trends which brutalise or cause torment to the child. We can never sufficiently stress the baneful effects of some of our customs which should have been abandoned long ago as they do no good to the health and the development of the personality of the child.

Furthermore, violence in all its forms should be proscribed from the behaviour of adults towards children. As the young are the future of a country, governments should understand that they do not have the right to ill-treat and massacre children, whatever might be their political or other reasons for wanting to do so.

The International Year of the Child nears its end and the lot of children has not improved.

Our duty, of each and every one of us, is to ensure for our children a healthy life, free from violence and abuses, free from the temptations of alcohol, drugs and debauchery which, when they do not decimate them, ruin their health, their mental equilibrium and, as a result, their capacity for work.

ELEMENTS OF A NEW APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF EXCISION

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Excision is a subject which is difficult to approach without becoming involved in the controversy between the "upholders of African traditions" and the "alarmists". We have decided to stand apart from this controversy because we consider that the problem has been improperly stated. We have preferred to speak of concepts, methods and approaches in the light of information collected in Mali and the Ivory Coast, since the need is for adequate methods of approach rather than for detailed descriptions coloured by indignation and moral considerations.

The theoretical problem

Two major events, International Women's Year in 1975 and the current International Year of the Child, have helped to give new depth to the debate on excision.[1]

The first theories on the practice in Africa go back to the early years of the century when A. Van Gennep classified it among the rites of passage[2] authorising the entry of a young individual into an adult group. Other authors have described it in harsher terms as a barbarous practice which should be abolished.[3] This ethnocentric viewpoint has been reinforced or opposed by the politico-sexual approach of feminists who see excision as an expression of the war between the sexes. It might be thought that this would have brought the debate onto a new plane, but the institution is still seen through the eyes of outsiders, by whom it is described and judged according to culture-specific criteria and models.

The part taken in the debate by Africans, and particularly the populations concerned, has been totally ineffectual. The few writings and reactions that have come to our notice are either mere echoes of the feminist movement - which has its own theories and concepts[4] - or defensive reactions on the part of male African intellectuals who feel themselves under attack both as men and as Africans.

It was in 1958 that the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women requested the World Health Organisation to make an investigation of excision and to propose measures to put an end to it.

The approach of international organisations, which lay the major stress on the medical aspect of the problem, appears to arouse the most interest among responsible persons in the countries concerned.

But, beyond these theoretical considerations, what are the real facts?

Starting from the hypothesis that variable factors, such as urban life, level of education and religious beliefs, determine the attitude of the population to the practice of excision, we have gathered information from different localities - two northern villages and one medium-sized town in the Ivory Coast, and Bamako in Mali - which reveals how the problem is seen and experienced from the inside.

The factual data

In the Ivory Coast excision is practised mainly in the western and northern parts of the country. The information available covers this ritual in three subgroups of the Senufo ethnic group: the Niarafolo of Tiègbè, the Fodonon of Lataha and the Tagouana of Katiola.

The village environment

Tiègbè is a small Niarafolo village 18 km from Ferkessédougou, with nearly 200 inhabitants, mostly Muslim. Apart from the recent introduction of cotton growing and the construction of a school the village has changed little. As in the past, girls are excised and boys circumcised at ages ranging from 7 to 15 years. This event is not attended by any special ceremony, but each child remains in its family and receives care after the operation. According to the customary chief of the village the inhabitants still practise these rituals because they have inherited them from their ancestors and he does not think that it will be possible to abolish them.

The reaction of the chief of the village of Lataha is different. Lataha is a Fodonon village with almost 3,000 inhabitants, about 10 km from the town of Korhogo. The population, which adheres to the traditional religion, practises excision but not circumcision. Only adult women are excised, however, just before their first confinement. Those who have fertility problems are also excised, but later. There is no period of seclusion, nor are there any festivities in connection with the ceremony. The costs of paying the excisor (chickens, money, meals) are borne by the future husband, the marriage being celebrated simultaneously with or after the excision. Here the customary chief seems to be more open to change: when we asked him what he thought about the future of the ritual he said: "we have always practised excision, but now that we send our children to school it is for the school to decide. Nobody cares whether the women are excised or not."

The urban environment

Katiola

We tried to find out what significance excision still retained in Katiola, a medium-sized town whose population consists essentially of Tagouana, Mangoro and Djimini, who all practise excision. Katiola is the place where the festivities to mark the nineteenth anniversary of the accession of the Ivory Coast to independence are to be held in December 1979, and at the time we carried out our survey the town was in the process of complete transformation.

In the light of the changes taking place in this locality it is interesting to see how the attitudes of the population to excision are changing. A group interview with an excisor, the mother of a family, a local executive, the President of the Women's Association, the Secretary of the Party and a woman primary school teacher enabled us to get an idea of the situation. All girls born and bred in Katiola are excised, but circumcision is not practised. According to local beliefs excision, namely "the removal of the male organ of the woman", is favourable to procreation. In the view of the population there is a definite connection between excision and procreation. When a woman is barren, for example, she consults a soothsayer, who usually advises her to undertake to become an excisor if she wants to have a child. The woman makes this promise beside a water pitcher which is then overturned. When her wishes are answered experienced excisors come and make her a fetish and she thus enters the corporation. This explains the relatively large number of excisors in Katiola.

This connection between excision and procreation established by the population endows the practice with a sacred character which confers certain powers and much prestige on the excisor. She transmits her knowledge to a female member of her entourage who assists her and who must carry out an operation on the day of her death before she is buried. Her body is taken to the cemetery by the excisors, who must neither eat nor drink between the time when they learn of her death and the burial. Once at the cemetery, the excisors sometimes dance around the remains, but a woman may not make mistakes in the steps at the risk of losing her life.

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The number of women practising excision has grown with the increase in the population, and there is no longer any age or any specific period for the organisation of the ritual.

In older societies all the girls in the same village had to undergo the ritual at the same time, and there might be intervals of 7 to 10 years between two excision ceremonies. One of the excisors, at the request of the inhabitants of her village, would inform the excisors of neighbouring villages, who would join her so that several villages could have their girls excised at the same time. The operation took place only on Thursdays or Sundays during the dry season, since according to the traditions of this agricultural group it is expressly forbidden to shed human blood during the rainy season for fear that the rain would stop.

The ceremony was, and still is, surrounded by the greatest secrecy. The girls are told that they are going elephant hunting (solo - a word which has come to designate the act of excision in Tagouana).

On the day of the excision the girls come out of their houses when a bell is rung and are taken to a wood outside the village where the operation is carried out. Whatever their age, they are all carried, either by an aunt or by another woman of their family, back to the village where festivities await them. During their period of seclusion, which lasts four weeks, they are guarded and looked after by an elderly woman (sometimes the excisor herself). No special instruction is given during the period of seclusion: the girls live in a group and receive visits from their relations and female friends who come to sing with them. They make themselves useful during the first weeks by spinning cotton, and later, when the wound begins to heal, they fetch water and wood for their neighbours.

According to our informants haemorrhages and other fatal accidents, which would appear to be fairly infrequent, not only depend on the person practising the operation but may also be the work of persons wishing harm to the girl and her family.

Owing to the number of cases of haemorrhage and tetanus recorded in 1978, however, the association of persons born in Katiola, whose membership consists of young men and women executives, looked into the problem. The public health committee of the association carried out a campaign to make people aware of the issue, which provoked a variety of reactions according to their background:

- men and women executives residing in Abidjan opposed the practice, which they considered unnecessary in the present social context, and which moreover presents many risks from the medical point of view. Most of them managed to protect their girls from excision, either by dissuading their own parents or by giving them firm recommendations. There are, however, cases where parental pressure is so strong that the executives end up by yielding;

- young executives and pupils residing in Katiola see the problems of excision in the same way as the first group, but the power of the excisors is such that most of the young people living in their vicinity are powerless;

- elderly men are often indifferent, since they see excision as women's business in which tradition does not allow them to meddle;

- women themselves put up the strongest resistance to any challenge to excision, because they are convinced that a woman who is not excised has fertility problems. The financial aspect of the problem has also to be considered: the excisors, of whom there are many in Katiola, draw from their occupation substantial incomes and much prestige, which they are unwilling to give up.

Faced with this resistance, the political and administrative authorities and medical staff have decided to begin by informing the population of the accidents directly connected with the operation. Thus, during a health education campaign (vaccinations, pre- and post-natal consultations, measures against the Guinea worm), a team of influential personalities, including the President of the Women's Association, the Secretary of the Party, a nurse with experience in major endemic diseases, and the town delegate have persuaded the population to take certain precautions, such as the administration of anti-tetanus serum before all excisions and the use of alcohol, mercurochrome and coagulants. The girls' parents buy these medical supplies and the nurse at the dispensary administers the anti-tetanus vaccine before the operation.

Bamako

We have tried to analyse the problem of excision in a larger town than Katiola with a variety of ethnic groups, languages and beliefs.

Owing to the mingling of ethnic groups, who are also all subject to strong Islamic influence, certain groups who did not originally practise excision have now adopted it. Among the groups for which excision and circumcision are ancestral practices are the Bambara and the Dogon. The Bambara and Dogon myths, which have been described at length and analysed by anthropologists,[5] are, in reality, unfamiliar to the population of Bamako, which advances religious and cultural arguments ("it is the law of Islam", said a mother, who added that it was a legacy from the ancestors); fear of derision ("a woman who is not excised is a man without knowing it and looks ridiculous because people talk about it to her children"); control over one's own sexual urges ("if parents persist in not excising their daughters, the girls will throw their bonnets over the windmill"); and aesthetic arguments ("the clitoris is not a pretty sight"). Those are all some fairly well-known arguments in favour of excision. Nevertheless, it appears to be on the decline, as witness the following statement:

Mrs. M., an excisor at Niarela: "I have been practising for nearly 20 years. In the early days I used to receive eight to ten girls on Thursdays, Fridays and Mondays - days which are considered favourable in our society - at the end of each lunar year. The girls were 12 to 14 years old and generally married within a year of the excision. The ceremony was attended by the girls' parents and those of their fiancés. At that time it was a mark of courage to undergo excision, but things have changed a lot nowadays. Parents bring their girls when they are still very small and at any time of the year. I can't give you any figures, but I know that the number of children is on the decline. I get no children for a week or two, and then suddenly I may receive four or five babies for three days running .... From what I hear in the street and what my friends tell me children nowadays want excision to be abolished. This worries me a little - not that I depend on it for my living, but what will the professionals do?"

This is a revealing statement, not only as regards the way the situation has developed over the last 20 years, but also as regards its financial aspects.

According to a midwife of the maternal and child welfare centre in Kati the practice is not only useless but also pernicious, since it may have many sequels (haemorrhages, local infection, tetanus, rupture at the time of confinement, frigidity, etc.).

Here is the point of view of a young engineer: "Without wishing to break with tradition, because I don't want to be at odds with the society to which I belong, I think excision is unnecessary. It's true that its adoption by certain societies was dictated by social considerations centuries ago, but in my opinion these considerations no longer hold good given the high degree of intermingling among peoples and the enormous progress made by science."

Remarks

Although the above information is incomplete, there are valuable lessons to be learned from it. It reveals the errors of certain theories on which the debate on excision is based, and at the practical level it can serve as food for thought regarding the line of action to be taken.

The theoretical aspects

Many authors have adopted a theoretical and schematic approach which is not necessarily relevant to African reality, and have thus reached conclusions which can only confuse the issue.

Correspondence between circumcision and excision

The data collected in the two villages in the north of the Ivory Coast and in Katiola cast doubt on the point of view of anthropologists who as early as the beginning of the century regarded circumcision and excision as analogous rituals for the integration of a young individual into the adult group. Contrary to the current view that "no population practises excision without circumcision", excision is not invariably the feminine equivalent of circumcision. Certain societies practise excision without circumcision and vice versa. The two rituals may be entirely independent of each other. Many other assertions have been shown to be erroneous, as is demonstrated by the following examples: "the space to which the excision corresponds is defined by the inside of the home; the place where the excision is performed belongs to the 'private' area of the family circle, which is part of the village", and "circumcision is a collective ritual .... Excision, on the other hand, is an inidvidual ritual, to which girls are subjected in isolation".[7]

Nor does excision necessarily provide girls with an opportunity for special instruction, as shown by the examples just examined.

Sexual pleasure

The views of politico-sexual campaigners who claim that excision results in the suppression of all sexual pleasure in women should be modified in the light of information to be supplied by the women concerned on their sexual experiences. No serious study has yet been made of the subject; all that we have to go on are preconceived ideas and the testimony of men. In connection with the former, a doctor has told us of excised women who are now developing sexual inhibitions as a result of what they have read, which had led them to doubt the normality of their sexual behaviour. As for men, some believe that excised women are frigid, and others speak mostly of the difference between excised and non-excised women.

In our opinion, sexuality is a highly complex relationship with another person involving many factors. A serious study on the basis of an anonymous survey would appear a necessary preliminary to the formulation of any theory on the sexuality of excised women.[7] The most pressing aspect of the problem, however, is the medical one.

The theory of mutilation

The identity of the persons involved, the terminology used and the approaches adopted, are highly important. It should be remembered that anyone speaking of sex and culture may touch on sensitive issues, and one should be wary of pronouncing value judgements. Unfortunately, authors have difficulty in avoiding pejorative terms when analysing problems of this kind. In 1937, A. de Villeneuve[7] wrote in connection with infibulation that "... Somali women behaved like 'unnatural mothers' with their daughters, that they were members of an 'abominably venal race', and that excision was a form of 'voluntary castration practised in the name of who knows what bloodthirsty sexual cult', of primordial sadism and a 'taste for mutilation'".

Forty years later, Awa Thiam[7] cries in similar terms: "Can the only badge of membership of a community be mutilation, and what is worse, sexual mutilation?"

An African woman journalist asks "Why then do we subject our own children to such horrors?" This is an awkward question. When the problem is posed in these terms it often provokes negative reactions. To describe in terms such as "horror" and "mutilation" a practice which, whatever one may say, is a distinguishing feature of a culture, is to wound the amour-propre of many African intellectuals who nevertheless are aware of its questionable aspect. Admittedly, the removal of any part of the body which results in the elimination of a function is a form of mutilation, but to regard excision as such is to treat it as an end in itself, to consider only its mechanical aspect and to deprive it of all the significance conferred upon it by the societies that practise it; it is also to make a value judgement based on criteria and patterns of thought which have no validity for the populations concerned. Accordingly, the latter often respond with indifference and astonishment to cries of alarm from without.

If excision were merely the mechanical act of removing part of a child's body, and if it were experienced as such by the child herself and her family, it would be a cruel abomination. But, as we know, children in African societies represent wealth above all things and, in the words of a Bambara proverb, "the hen gives nothing to her chicks until she has been shaken". Given this place of children in African tradition, how can one claim that excision is a senseless act and point the finger of accusation at the societies that practise it?

A detailed analysis of the social formations in which excision is practised reveals the links existing between this institution and other aspects of the life of the group. We are convinced that excision will disappear as soon as all parents know and believe that excision presents dangers for children. The problem is how to get the message across. The movement has begun; it may be speeded up by the setting up of an adequate system of information and education of the population.

As a phenomenon of civilisation, excision is undergoing an evolution which can be defined only in the context of the social formations of which it is a part. African societies are undergoing changes in which no institution is spared. Excision, along with the representations and discussions surrounding it, must necessarily be seen as part of this process.

Education and migration to the towns are the main agents of this transformation. New attitudes, involving the desire to safeguard girls from the ritual, are to be found among the wealthier sectors of the urban population and sometimes the medium-income sectors as well. The very fact of living in a large town brings about a certain relaxation in the pressure and control which a group can exercise on an individual. The latter is faced with other realities which will lead him to devise another system of reference and thus abandon certain practices for which he does not see the need. We have noticed this trend among young executives from societies where excision is practised. The grandparents, who consider that the couple are responsible for the upbringing of their children, avoid imposing their point of view. When this is not the case, the young parents resort to various stratagems: they tell the grandparents that the children have already been excised in hospital or bring them round to accepting their wishes. The latter course of action may create conflicts between the generation of the parents and that of the grandparents, but these conflicts can be overcome. Islam, or rather an imperfect knowledge of the requirements of that religion, lies at the roots of some of the resistance: the head of the Islamised village of Tiègbè seems more reticent than that of Lataha, a non-Muslim who thinks that it is now for the school to decide whether excision should be maintained or abolished.

This movement has not yet taken a decisive turn, but it is important to note that it exists.

A different approach

Africa is now engaged in the search for ways of removing the obstacles preventing the access of her peoples to a better life, and changes are progressively being recorded in many fields. But these results can be obtained only at the cost of much patience and many educational campaigns, since each step will require the populations concerned to cut away a fragment of the web of beliefs and practices which they have woven over the years. Excision, which is one of the these practices, is the cause of a heated controversy between those in whom it arouses alarm and those who uphold it in the name of tradition.

In the introduction to this article we said that the problem appeared to have been incorrectly stated, since both "traditionalists" and "alarmists" tend to regard the institution as an end in itself, whereas, like any social phenomenon, it is bound to evolve - and is in fact doing so - with the social formations which have engendered it.

These changes, which are due to internal and external causes, are admittedly slow, but unless we bear them in mind we shall be unable to arrive at a less emotional approach more appropriate to the circumstances and bring home to both "alarmists" and "traditionalists" that the ritual of excision is not immutable.

Every girl, every woman, who dies from the after-effects of an excision is one victim too many. The state of knowledge in our traditional societies has not permitted the establishment of a direct relationship between the practice of this ritual and the enormous risks that it may involve. Medical research in some of the areas concerned and the many statements of midwives and doctors have thrown light on the after-effects, both in the short and in the long term. The right of each individual to health and life is, we are convinced, a sufficiently cogent argument to induce our populations to shoulder their responsibilities. The main thing is to find the right approach and to get the message across to them.

In our opinion the slowness in the decline and abolition of excision, the resistance and most of the other difficulties encountered are due to errors in approach and - closely related to this factor - to the totally inadequate participation of the people concerned in the search for, and analysis of, the means to be employed.

The diversity of opinions on the ritual of excision between one place and another and the reactions of the different generations show that no single method can be applied. Strategies will have to be worked out to take account of the systems of values of the groups concerned, who will become interlocutors. This presupposes the existence or the establishment of a data bank on the representations and reactions of the groups concerned, particularly on the attitude to the excision of women, around whom the debate turns. As far as we know, this preliminary work, which should be carried out by multidisciplinary groups of African research workers - who would enjoy the confidence of the populations concerned - has not yet been done. The main sources of information are research dating from the colonial period and more recent analyses, which have often been made by outside observers. Medical data, which in our opinion are useful, fall into the hands of persons who describe the operations in great detail, making value judgements, offering solutions and parading their own obsessions in an effort to alarm public opinion. The problem is then magnified and engulfed in a flood of ready-made anthropological, psychoanalytical and feminist arguments. Such arguments are the more puzzling to the governments and peoples concerned in that any impression that might be given by a reading of alarmist literature is belied by the fact that, as one of the women interviewed in Katiola pointed out, serious accidents are relatively infrequent.

It is, of course, not our intention to minimise the gravity of the problem, but if we try to give it a dimension it does not possess, we shall merely puzzle those who are familiar with it from direct experience, and they will often remain indifferent because our propaganda will have a hollow ring.

The same applies to the public authorities, as witness the reaction of a woman in the Ivory Coast who is at the same time a political leader, a midwife and a member of a group practising excision: "Speaking as a practitioner, I am quite aware of the hazards of excision - tetanus, damage to blood vessels, haemorrhage, infection - but we have no intention of proclaiming its prohibition as we are aware of the complexity of the problem and above all of its cultural aspect. Our union is taking a very cautious approach, giving explanations to women who come to maternity homes for confinement and holding meetings in places where excision is practised. All this is being done discreetly and dispassionately, because we know that the practice is declining; as more girls attend school, families are practising it less and less, particularly in the towns."

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How can one describe a practice which is eminently cultural as a physical wound without at the same time belittling the image of a culture in its own eyes? This is the problem we have to solve if we are to be at all pragmatic, since, now that it has been scientifically established that, from the medical point of view at least, excision presents many hazards for girls and the women they are to become, all should be convinced of the need to put an end to it. Resistance, and the causes of the relative slowness in questioning the desirability of the ritual, are encountered basically at two levels:

(1) the desire of the older generation to maintain systems of beliefs and values which still give them a certain feeling of continuity; we have, however, seen from the reaction of a customary chief that changes are possible, although they are more difficult to obtain in Muslim areas; above all, one should avoid giving fragmentary information tinged with value judgements;

(2) the justified suspicion entertained by governments and by many intellectuals of the excessive rigidity of the arguments and patterns of thought on which discussion of excision is all too often based; although intellectuals often recognise that the case against it is well founded on medical grounds, they are not always prepared to combat it actively.

These are the fundamental reasons why we have doubts as to the expediency of internationalising the issue, since if universal solutions were proposed the countries concerned would be prevented from reflecting on its true nature. Solutions to the problem must be local. By using their initiative, well-informed Africans, both men and women, should be able to tackle the problem directly and study the best ways of solving it without resorting to the intermediary of ready-made formulas and theories.

Notes

[1] The controversy also covers infibulation, which we shall not deal with in this study for lack of sufficient information.

[2] A. Van Gennep: Les rites de passage (Paris, 1909; reprinted Paris and The Hague, 1969). Quoted by Nicole Sindzungre: "Le plus et le moins - A propos de l'excision", in Cahiers d'études africaines, 65, XVII (I), pp. 65-75.

[3] B.A. Gross: "Pour la suppression d'une coutume barbare: l'excision", in Notes africaines, 45, Jan. 1950. Quoted by Sindzungre, op. cit.

[4] Awa Thiam.

[5] Marcel Griaule: Dieu d'eau (Paris, Fayard, 1966).

[6] "Anciennes croyances et origines obscures", in Peuples, Vol. 6, No. II, 1979, p. 27.

[7] Sindzungre, op. cit.

THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN CHILD WELFARE

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Introduction

The present study, which makes no claims to be exhaustive, concerns the role of NGOs in child welfare. It is designed to permit an exchange of views between those responsible for welfare in Africa, who by reason of their duties are especially concerned with the conditions in which African children live and the factors which may directly or indirectly influence their future as workers who will shape the societies of tomorrow.

Although children everywhere in the world need protection, the subject is a particularly topical one in African countries, where over half the population is less than 20 years old and where thousands of workers are children under the age of 15 (about 16 million according to UNICEF estimates).

All this poses serious problems of child welfare, the quality of life and the future of children's upbringing in town and country, both in industrialised and in developing countries.

Hence the importance of the specific theme of "the role of NGOs in child welfare".

Prominence must be given to the fundamental and mutually complementary roles played by governmental and non-governmental bodies in child welfare, particularly the welfare of children who are obliged to work at a fairly early age. Special attention must be devoted to the many children who work without legislative protection and to the most deprived children, namely orphans, abandoned children, handicapped children and the children of the poor.

This raises a number of questions:

- What kind of co-operation should be developed between governments and NGOs in order to improve child welfare?

- Should the role of the public authorities be to control, to supervise or to co-ordinate the activities of NGOs?
- To what extent can NGOs take the initiative in action to eliminate the exploitation of children, to secure the observance of appropriate periods of work and rest, or to organise informal education for children who have been forced into the labour market too soon?
- Can child welfare be effective without the welfare of the mother and the entire family?
- How can the role of the father in the upbringing of children in the first years of life be redefined?
- How can working children and adolescents participate actively in their own development and co-operate in their own welfare?

But before we examine all these problems in working parties, it is necessary to define the term NGO and how it can intervene in the important field of child welfare.

What is an NGO?

In November 1977 the first round table for representatives of governments and NGOs in Rwanda was held in Kigali. The purpose of the meeting was to exchange views on the five-year cultural and socio-economic development plan of the country for the period 1977-81 and to lay the foundation for permanent consultation machinery between the Government and the NGOs.

The participants at the round table defined an NGO as "a non-profit making body which does not depend on a government, which is thus independent as to its finances and management, and which participates in the development of this country at any level".

This definition will admittedly not satisfy everybody, since it does not, for example, bring out the distinction between an NGO and a series of other *de jure* or *de facto* associations such as clubs and other private associations.

For the time being, however, I propose that it be retained until we are able to improve and complete it during the discussions which will follow this paper.

NGOs may be either national or international, denominational or non-denominational. A number of examples are quoted below:

- International Union of Child Welfare;
- International Council on Social Welfare;
- Women's International Democratic Federation;
- League of Red Cross Societies and National Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies;
- International Catholic Child Bureau;
- Philanthropic foundations such as the Pathfinder Fund and the Catholic Relief Services;
- International Association of Youth Magistrates;
- International Federation of Social Workers;
- International Union of Family Organisations;
- World Peace Council;
- Amnesty International;
- International Federation for Home Economics;
- Muslim World League;
- World Muslim Congress;
- Society for International Development;
- CARITAS;
- International Catholic Union of the Press;
- International Parents' Organisation;
- Religious congregations;
- Youth, workers, women's and students' associations not integrated with political parties;
- Various scientific associations or research institutions;
- Schools and private universities.

There are many more, which I shall not mention, because the list is very long. You are no doubt aware that the NGO Committee for the International Year of the Child quotes about 220 international NGOs and 700 associate organisations and individuals who have undertaken to make every effort to secure the welfare of children, particularly those in developing countries.

The objectives of NGOs are as complex as they are varied. They operate throughout the world, particularly in the fields of:

- public health;
- nutrition and food;
- social (public) and charitable assistance;
- pre-school and school education, and out-of-school education, such as the education of adults.

They are either unisectoral (public health, dispensaries, maternity homes, nutritional education, pre-school or out-of-school activities, co-operatives) or multisectoral (integrated rural development, social and health facilities, adult education in a number of subjects).

It should, however, be mentioned that their status is not the same throughout the world. There are differences depending on whether the country is developing or industrialised, or whether the regime is totalitarian, liberal, socialist or capitalist.

As regards the principles underlying its action, each NGO enters freely into commitments, without itself being in any way committed to the policies of its country of origin. NGOs thus co-operate in the development of the countries in which they work with full respect for their development plans and national priorities.

The fields and the means of action of NGOs are usually set forth in specific agreements (or conventions).

Finally, in certain cases national NGOs, such as Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, schools, medical establishments, orphanages, and physical or mental rehabilitation centres, may receive government subsidies to help them to attain their objectives.

Why should children be protected?

Children, who bring us joy and happiness, are a treasure beyond price, and hold the future of mankind in their hands. It is, however, for adults to assure that future by making every effort to find effective means of overcoming the obstacles to the normal development of children, who are the workers who will build the society of tomorrow.

The child is thus a potential adult, but is nevertheless highly vulnerable. He needs special and intensive care from his parents and all his family, from all his teachers, and from everyone in his immediate and broader surroundings. The face of the world of tomorrow will be that of the child of today: will it be a face of poverty and violence or one of peace and physical, mental, moral and intellectual welfare? Who knows?

This was what the great family of the United Nations wanted to stress when it adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child on 20 November 1959 and when, 20 years later, it proclaimed 1979 the International Year of the Child.

The objectives fixed for 1979 are to consolidate and give concrete expression to the rights of the child, including its right to protection, proclaimed in November 1959. The Declaration of the Rights of the Child contains the following stipulations:

Preamble

....

> Whereas the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth,

....

Principle 2

> The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. In the enactment of laws for this purpose, the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration.

....

Principle 8

> The child shall in all circmmstances be among the first to receive protection and relief.

Principle 9

The child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. He shall not be the subject of traffic, in any form.

The child shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age; he shall in no case be caused or permitted to engage in any occupation or employment which would prejudice his health or education, or interfere with his physical, mental or moral development.

Principle 10

The child shall be protected from practices which may foster racial, religious and any other form of discrimination. He shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men.

It is thus clear that the concern for the protection of children is a cherished objective of all mankind. It is admittedly an ambitious one: public opinion must be mobilised, made more sensitive to, and more familiar with, the needs of children, needs which are not only material but also affective, psychological and intellectual, in order to stimulate a new awareness of the place of children in a society where they are not always welcomed - in short, to recognise the value of childhood as an essential phase in the life of man and to treat it with love and respect.

This greater interest in children is faced with a harsh reality: despite technological and medical progress, despite the development of communications, we know that all over the world hundreds of thousands of children are the victims of hunger, sickness, lack of education, violence and armed conflicts which they do not even understand; the study published recently by the International Labour Office has thrown light on the lamentable situation of many of the 52 million of the world's workers who are children, some of whom are barely 7 years old and many of whom are ill-treated and exploited. Even in countries where these terrible evils are unknown children are used and even manipulated, for instance by publicity in consumer societies.

It would, however, be unrealistic to hope that the International Year of the Child will root out all evils and abuses and universally restore the respect which is due to the child, but it is nevertheless gratifying to see that today's adults are not concerned solely with the problems of the world economy, with the exhaustion of the natural resources of the globe and with pollution. They are also aware of the problem of population and of tomorrow's world, the world of their children. They are paying special attention to the mysterious process of "growth" of the child which will determine not only the external appearance of the man or the woman of the future, but also its inner being, its psychological make-up, its intelligence, its beauty and its ability to live with others.

What children should be protected?

All children need more or less extensive protection depending on their family background and the socio-economic and cultural context in which they live (environment).

During the IYC governments, NGOs and individuals have been called upon to intensify their efforts at the local, national and community levels in order to obtain a lasting improvement in the welfare of children, special attention being devoted to those who belong to the most vulnerable and least privileged groups, for instance:

- children in underdeveloped countries where hunger and ignorance are still prevalent;
- orphans;
- abandoned children who are forced to earn their living;
- the physically and mentally handicapped;
- delinquents or socially maladjusted children.

Against what should children be protected?

Children must be protected against anything that may hamper their development and harm their welfare, against all ills, particularly social ones, such as:

- poverty;
- hunger and malnutrition;
- sickness;
- ignorance and illiteracy;
- unhealthy living conditions;
- delinquency;
- violence;

- exploitation:
  - . arduous work which is beyond their age and strength;
  - . underpaid work;
  - . clandestine employment;
  - . withdrawal from school;
  - . abandonment;
  - . parental irresponsibility;
  - . unfavourable influence of mass media and publicity.

Faced with all these ills, the resources which are being used for the development of the child are becoming increasingly inadequate, as has been recognised recently by UNICEF in considering the situation of children in developing countries. This is characterised by 12 major features:

1. Health services reach only one child in 20 in developing countries.

2. Out of 100 million children born each year in developing countries, 7 out of 10, namely 70 million, are born without adequate care.

3. Over 200 million children are suffering from different forms of malnutrition.

4. About 85 per cent of children in rural areas have no access to supplies of drinking water.

5. One child in five dies before the age of 5 years.

6. Over 200,000 children go blind each year owing to serious vitamin A deficiency.

7. At least 100 million children between the ages of 7 and 10 in developing countries have no education and learn neither reading, writing nor arithmetic.

8. The estimated proportion of children enrolled in schools is 40 per cent; moreover, they attend for very few years and lapse into illiteracy later on.

9. Less than 1 per cent of children under school age have access to nursery schools and child-care facilities.

10. Children and adolescents represent over half of the population of shanty towns and mushroom towns. The population of the latter is increasing at three or four times the rate of that of modern urban areas, the rate of growth sometimes reaching 10 to 15 per cent a year.

11. Over 810 million children and infants are growing up in isolated rural areas where mortality and illiteracy rates are very high, malnutrition is rife, and where there are few, if any, essential services.

12. The rate of inflation is increasing everywhere, causing a drop in the value of funds allotted to long-term programmes for children; this is jeopardising the already precarious situation of many millions of children as regards their health, their lives and their future.

If these social ills are to be done away with, active steps must be taken to promote: the improvement of the environment; an increase in economic resources to keep pace with demographic growth.

In other words, development should be encouraged and the quality of life improved.

This demands concerted action in basic areas of economic and social life. Such action should include the population (particularly children and adolescents), which is an inexhaustible source of creative power and a decisive factor in progress.

Protection of children would be ineffective without protection of their families in general and their mothers in particular; it is gratifying to see that many services in different parts of the world are designed to protect both mothers and children.

It should also be remarked that measures to protect children have become necessary owing to the serious crisis in the institution of the family and in social structures in general. Policies for children are inseparable from family and social policies, and it is thus necessary to define and implement over-all development strategies.

The best way of protecting children is through prevention, based on the tradition of an environment favourable to the whole family so that it is oriented both towards the world and towards the child.

Moreover, it is a popular axiom that "prevention is better than cure".

It is obvious that a study of such limited scope as this cannot satisfy the reader entirely, since it is impossible to cover all aspects of child welfare. The reader will find it necessary to consult the abundant literature which already exists on the subject, for instance the many publications of the International Union of Family Organisations (IUFO), particularly the publications of its Familis International Documentation Centre and the report of the International Conference on the Family organised by IUFO at UNESCO headquarters in Paris from 8-10 January 1979 in connection with the activities of the IYC on the theme of the responsibility of the family in the development of the child.

Action of NGOs in the field of child welfare

NGOs and governments have co-operated from the very beginning in the great task of child welfare. The IYC has now made men, women and communities more aware of the need for redoubled efforts and vigilance to improve the living conditions of children, who are the citizens of tomorrow and the builders of a better and more peaceful world.

The activities of NGOs complete and support the various measures taken by the public authorities to improve the quality of life of children.

When necessary, the NGOs draw the attention of governments to certain tragic cases in which the rights of the child are trampled underfoot, for instance in countries with racist and fascist regimes where thousands of children are condemned to poverty and torture (southern Africa, etc.).

The child welfare activities of NGOs are both numerous and varied, and are particularly outstanding in fields directly related to the situation of mothers and children, such as:

- nutrition and food;
- child development (pre-school education);
- health protection;
- education and upbringing (e.g. religious congregations in Rwanda);
- functional literacy and the war against ignorance;
- legislation;
- protection of children's work;
- organisation of social services for social promotion and the promotion of the family, particularly in the cases of poor families; displaced families (migrants); separated or incomplete families; the war on social inequality;
- maternity protection;
- organisation of family planning services;
- promotion of women and support to women's organisations;
- information: children's press and mass media as a whole;

- facilities for abandoned children (orphanages or children's villages);
- leisure activities (sports, books, playgrounds, painting and drawing);
- apprenticeship, including on-the-job training;
- family dwellings: the term "dwelling" includes collective facilities, housing and the general environment in which the child lives (e.g. Journeymen Builders);
- rehabilitation of the socially, physically and mentally handicapped, including their reintegration into productive society to give them a sense of responsibility and an awareness of their social role (e.g. Home de la Vierge des Pauvres, Gatagara, Rwanda);
- peace in the world (disarmament) (e.g. action of the Women's International Democratic Federation, the World Peace Council and Amnesty International);
- financing of scientific research on maternal and chil welfare; activities of universities and other scientific research institutions (e.g. CFNR-INRS, Rwanda);
- strengthening of material, social, medical and legal assistance to underprivileged children.

The list is already a long one, and it could be lengthened almost indefinitely. Let us merely stress the four following points which would appear to be of real priority for the present Symposium. Activities are carried out at the level of prevention, detection and treatment, where the co-operation between the public authorities and NGOs is particularly fruitful and genuinely complementary.

Activities of NGOs in the war on malnutrition

As already mentioned, over 200 million children in developing countries are suffering from different forms of malnutrition. In addition, over 200 children go blind every year owing to serious vitamin A deficiency.

Public opinion has become alive to the tragedy of hunger, and food aid to developing countries is given with the assistance of a number of national and international organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, in the richer countries.

Examples of NGOs which are combating malnutrition are the Catholic Relief Service, the Red Cross, Caritas and the Inter-cultural Co-operation Association.

For several decades these organisations, in co-operation with the public authorities in our countries, have not ceased to alleviate the distress of our peoples in times of famine and natural disasters. In Rwanda, for example, the Inter-cultural Co-operative Association, the religious congregations and the Catholic Relief Service are actively supporting the establishment of nutritional centres throughout the country. Since 1963 over 80 of these centres have been set up to:

- improve the nutrition of the population in general and prevent protein and calory deficiency in particular;
- promote family health;
- contribute to the socio-economic development of the country.

Other NGOs are introducing new methods of cultivation in order to increase production and improve the nutrition of the population.

Finally, several NGOs are participating in the financing of food projects for infants and expectant and nursing mothers and in pre-school projects such as crèches and nurseries.

Action of NGOs in the field of health protection

The fate of new-born children and infants in general is closely linked with that of their mothers, and the welfare of both is normally assured by means of an institution generally known as "maternal and child welfare" or "maternal and child health".

The vulnerability of mothers and children is particularly high in insufficiently protected environments exposed to the hazards of nature. Many women die in childbirth and, in certain particularly unfavourable environments, children have only one chance in two of surviving between birth and the age of 5 years. It is thus impossible to view the health of mothers and infants separately from that of the family as a whole. In order to improve the health of mothers, children and the whole family, NGOs are co-operating, at the request of the countries concerned, in the following fields:

- vaccines, medicaments and medicaments and medical equipment;
- family planning services;

- sanitation equipment and products;
- all kinds of buildings: health centre, maternal and child protection centre, maternity homes, hospitals;
- technical co-operation personnel at the request of the national authorities or under assistance projects;
- training of personnel by means of fellowships or by paying the cost of studies;
- vehicles for mobile services.

Among the NGOs active in this field are the Red Cross, religious bodies, volunteer associations (particularly from the Federal Republic of Germany, France and the United States) and religious congregations.

Role of NGOs in combating the exploitation of children

In a number of our countries children have to work hard from a very early age, helping their parents with work in the fields, caring for their younger brothers and sisters, fetching water and wood, and looking after the animals.

Children's work merges into that of adults. If it is in most cases the mother who asks the child to help, sometimes removing it from school, this is because she herself is overburdened with work. In order to solve the problem of the child, therefore, it is first necessary to solve those of its family, in particular those of the mother. A number of projects to improve the living conditions of the mother, the child and the whole family are being carried out in our countries and have been reinforced during the International Year of the Child.

Among these projects may be mentioned:

- maternal and child protection centres;
- nutritional centres;
- services to lighten the tasks of mothers and children, such as:
    - child-care facilities;
    - provision of water sources;
    - development of appropriate village technologies;
- family planning or birth control services;
- services to make parents aware of the importance of educating and training children;

- increasing the numbers of primary and other schools.

There can be no doubt that the NGOs have made a most remarkable contribution to all these projects, particularly during the IYC.

Apart from being exploited by his family, the child is equally exploited when he has to earn his living at an early age, as often happens when the family in which he was reared breaks up and can no longer bear the responsibility for his upbringing.

Our villages and towns are full of children who have left the family circle, often after the end of primary school, and who work for very low wages. Some of them, indeed, are willing to work only for their food and demand no wages at all, because they have no identity card and face the constant threat of dismissal or imprisonment during regular raids by the police or army.

Bearing in mind that exploitation of the child, by his family, by society or by his employer, is a brake to the development of his personality and consequently to his advancement, NGOs do not hesitate to express their point of view, with or without co-operation from the public authorities. During the IYC the NGOs have helped to make the authorities and public opinion aware of their responsibilities to children who start work at too early an age.

These organisations, in co-operation with the public authorities, have also campaigned for the recognition by the authorities and public opinion of the labour rights of the child, whether proclaimed by countries which have legislation to protect children or declared by the United Nations General Assembly in 1959. Examples of organisations which have done this are the Women's International Democratic Federation and Amnesty International.

Role of NGOs in the war on ignorance and illiteracy

A number of developing countries find it difficult to provide schooling for all children of school age. To solve this crucial problem, some countries have reformed their educational systems in order to adapt them to the actual situation of their population. Far-reaching reforms have been experimented with or are already being implemented in Benin, Guinea, Rwanda, Senegal and Togo.

These reforms, however, experience difficulties in recruiting skilled personnel and obtaining credits; they also have to contend with the force of custom, the resistance of traditional institutions, veneration for university degrees, etc.

Depending on the requirements of each country, the assistance of NGOs in the field of education consists of the following:

- participating in the training of skilled personnel by the granting of fellowships for courses of study of varying lengths;
- giving children the opportunity to realise their physical, intellectual and cultural potential by building, equipping and operating establishments such as schools, colleges, training centres in various branches of the economy (construction, fisheries, child care) and pre-school and informal education facilities;
- supplying teaching materials;
- supplying vehicles and spare parts.

In Rwanda educational and training activities are undertaken mostly by religious bodies. In other countries, parents' associations and rural family centres are the most effective.

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However, despite all the efforts of NGOs and the public authorities throughout the world, the problems of children today are becoming increasingly complex and alarming. We must redouble our efforts in this area if we want to assure the future of mankind.

Today, more than ever before, the public authorities and NGOs must co-operate and complement each other's activities. The IYC has given the world a unique opportunity to strengthen these bonds, since it has marked the beginning of a new era of more concentrated and concerted action on behalf of children and on behalf of peace throughout the world.

The IYC has also drawn the attention of adults, adolescents and children to the central position of children in the concerns of each community and each individual (educators, economists, social workers, farmers, legislators). Children must not, however, be objects of protection but must be encouraged to take an active part in all activities designed to assure their full physical, moral and intellectual development.

Another important result of the IYC is that NGOs have endeavoured to strengthen co-operation among themselves, thanks to the energetic action of the NGO Committee for the IYC, whose Chairman and members have spared no efforts to ensure that the IYC attains all its short- and long-term objectives. We should like to congratulate them most warmly and give them every encouragement in their task.

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Conclusion

As we have just seen, neither the NGOs nor the public authorities have waited for the IYC to act in the field with which we are concerned, namely the important field of child welfare.

Obviously, however, it is thanks to the IYC that a number of new activities in favour of children have been planned by States and national ad hoc committees, and that the number of other spontaneous initiatives of NGOs, local communities and individuals has increased throughout the world.

Now, more than ever before, the child is at the core of the concerns of mankind, and we are happy to see that individuals and communities all over the earth have at last understood the message of the United Nations General Assembly, which as early as 1959 stressed the duty of all human beings and all countries to give of their best to children so as to safeguard human brotherhood, happiness, freedom and peace for all.

The IYC is coming to an end, but the future is rich in promise, since all the activities undertaken (an inventory of which has not yet been made) will have beneficial effects on humanity as a whole in both the short and the long term. This, at least, is our hope. It is also the hope of all of you assembled here, you, the apostles of peace, who have braved a thousand difficulties in your unequivocal condemnation of the arms race and your vigorous defence of the rights of the child.

Before closing, I should like to put forward a few points for reflection which may facilitate later discussions and help to guide future action, as suggested by the NGO Committee for the IYC at its plenary session held in Geneva at the beginning of 1979:

1. What are NGOs in reality? What is their real status and mission? What is the real impact of their action on the life of beneficiary communities?

2. There may be conflicts between NGOs and the public authorities as regards methods of work (e.g. imported methods of work) as well as ideological conflicts, financial blackmail and conflicts between "power" and "knowledge". How can this situation be remedied?

3. How justified are certain criticisms of NGOs on the grounds that, for instance, they are paternalistic and exploit the local population or that their purpose is to absorb unemployment in their countries of origin?

4. The question of customs duties is often raised in connection with foreign NGOs. What is the true situation?

5. A number of NGOs may be working in the same country in the fields of medicine, education or rural development, for instance, and when this is so the question of competition between them arises in most cases. There is overlapping and a lack of consultation and co-operation, and each wishes to impose its own working methods. This means that the populations to be served are torn between several choices. What can be done to eliminate this competition?

6. All children need protection, but what can be done to strengthen special protective measures for certain categories of particularly underprivileged children, such as:

   - orphans and abandoned children;
   - children of poor families;
   - children of homes broken by the separation, divorce or death of the parents;
   - children at work, children who are ill-treated or tortured (violence);
   - children of unmarried mothers;
   - children one or both of whose parents are physically or mentally handicapped or alcoholic;
   - physically or mentally handicapped children;
   - delinquents and other socially handicapped children;
   - children of displaced families (migrants, refugees);
   - etc?

7. Is it not essential to give priority to preventive measures on the grounds that:

    - any child welfare policy must be first and foremost a general policy for the welfare of the family (specific action on behalf of children must take second place and is justified only in so far as the family system and the family policy break down);

    - child welfare can be effective only if the whole family is protected, in particular the mother;

    - the role of the father should be redefined in the light of the specific needs of small children (of pre-school age)?

8. Children must not merely be subjected to protective measures. The public authorities, NGOs, parents and all educators must ensure that adolescents and children who have reached a certain age take an active part in all activities for their protection and their full development.

9. It is important for us in Africa to give special thought to the position of children and young people in traditional society and to seek out the positive elements of child and youth welfare which are vanishing in the modern world, reinstating them in the present context of development.

10. In Africa, as in other poorer parts of the world, the problems of children are closely linked with the complex problems of the "vicious circle" of underdevelopment. Parents and all educators must be given adequate material resources for the effective protection of children. We are faced with the serious problem of the transfer of social benefits to families on the one hand, and that of the equitable distribution of wealth among the various regions of the world on the other. In other words, we must introduce a new world economic order.

All these are vital questions which call for sincere answers and a commitment to seek effective solutions.

Family and child welfare in our African countries will always be precarious as long as the world is divided by wars, selfishness and fratricidal hatred. Peace and justice are indispensable to happiness and the full physical and intellectual development of all children and all human beings.

Long live the child! Long live human brotherhood! Long live peace and justice throughout the world!

SYNTHESIS REPORT

by Jacqueline Ki-Zerbo,
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and Rapporteur of the Symposium

In declaring 1979 as the International Year of the Child (IYC), the United Nations General Assembly laid down as its principal objective, the promotion of the welfare of children and, in particular, of the least privileged amongst them.

Such children are to be found mostly, and in large numbers, in the Third World. This is why the IYC has a particular significance for Africa, which places man at the centre of development and which considers children as the principal guarantors of its freedom and dignity, in the present and in the future.

It is within this context that the Symposium examined the ways and means needed to achieve the conditions of life, education, training and employment indispensable for the development of the human resources and the future of the continent.

The plight of the African child

The debates brought to light the extent to which the African child is exposed to sickness and death particularly through enteritis, malaria, lung diseases, accidents and, above all, the undernourishment which aggravates diseases which are often benign in other regions of the world.

A child, apparently living in a warm and protective atmosphere, is in fact often the victim of certain habits, beliefs and customs which are fraught with danger and violence. Amongst those which the Symposium was able to identify, one may mention:

The abandonment of children

Cases of abandonment of children are becoming more and more frequent in Africa through the action of certain groups which reject twins, triplets, and albinos, of the unmarried mother who is sometimes debarred from school and, in particular, rejected by her family and by the person who made her pregnant, of parents of sick children, of divorced, alcoholic or mentally unbalanced parents, and of families, often polygamous, who have too many children.

Another form of abandonment is the neglect to which children, whose parents work away from the home, are subjected. Mothers who work in fields, workshops, markets or offices are not always around or available to cook the meals and look after their children. Such mothers cannot always count on the help of a relative, a servant of their husband even when he is at home.

Excision

This practice received the closest attention of the participants in view of the numerous dangers that it involves and which have been uncovered by medical research.

The Symposium reviewed the different forms of excision, the significance which various ethnic groups attach to them and the gynaecological and obstetrical complications to which they can give rise. Such consequences can be immediate or deferred. They include haemorrhage, infection, tetanus, retention of urine or of menstruation, complications relating to female sexual behaviour (such as frigidity or pain) and to confinement.

The perpetuation of this practice, which affects the health of girls and women, is explained by the attachment of the population to traditional beliefs and the ineffectiveness of the legal measures advocated, or even taken, in some countries.

Scarification and tattooing

These are frequently practised at a tender age, searing the body of the child. As it lacks maturity and is totally dependent on the adult, the child has no alternative but to accept such mutilations, together with the risks of infection and tetanus which they involve, even if they are sometimes regarded as part of a therapy. The Symposium stressed, however, the need for prudence and tact in dealing with such practices as excision, tattooing and scarification as one runs the risk of tilting at windmills, such practices being on the way out as is shown by the continuing debate on these subjects in the cities. Unlike in the past, these practices are no longer accompanied by feasting, dancing and singing.

Child marriages

Among certain ethnic groups girls are given in marriage at around the age of 8 or 9 years. While today the desire to receive the child's dowry gives rise to this kind of marriage, its significance was somewhat different in earlier societies. Furthermore, it was not a true marriage in that it was not immediately consummated. In any event such a marriage can have a traumatic effect on the little girl and can also be depressing for the man - often elderly - who contracts it. Sexual relations, which occur when the girl is around 12 or 13 years old, increase the birth rate and endangers the health of the mother, exposing her to the risks of death in child birth and to postnatal maladies.

Rape

Certain living conditions, which involve a slackening in the supervision of children or the exercise of certain activities outside their family circle, expose young girls to the risk of rape.

Prostitution

It is becoming increasingly frequent for young girls and boys to take to prostitution, particularly in urban areas. Among the causes are abject poverty, which makes some parents accept, more or less openly, that their child should prostitute itself, the unbridled pursuit of pleasure and, in particular, the sexual appetites of certain well-to-do adults, unemployment and underemployment, low wages, rural exodus and snobbishness, particularly with regard to clothes, among youth. Special mention must be made of the cost of education which, in certain States, induces some young persons to resort to prostitution to cover the cost of their board and lodging and buy the necessary school materials.

Corporal punishment

Repeated and undeserved corporal punishment can be classed among the acts of violence against the child. Such abuses may be perpetrated at school, when the teacher is incapable of controlling his temper, or in the home, when the parents of the children are overwrought, overworked or worse, mentally unbalanced.

Such behaviour was rare in the past, or at least it was mitigated by the fact that relatives, neighbours and even passers-by could intervene. Such scope for intervention no longer exists in the big cities where people live in small family units in crowded neighbourhoods from which children frequently run away.

Child labour

In Africa, adults have always given their children certain light tasks in order to develop their spirit of co-operation and to prepare them for their role in the productive apparatus.

This African pedagogy, which links theory and practice and teaches through doing, should not be confused with the compulsory and exhausting work which socio-economic changes impose on certain hapless children.

Within the family framework itself, orphans or children belonging to large polygamous families may sometimes be crushed under the weight of a multitude of tasks detrimental to their health or their schooling.

In the rural areas, they are sometimes called upon to participate in the harvesting of crops, without any remuneration, alongside their parents, or against payment of wages.

In urban areas, they ply a multitude of more or less arduous trades. These include hawking in the streets which is widely practised, particularly by small girls, because custom and male authoritarianism confine the women to the home.

The Symposium examined, in particular, the exploitation of children. Such exploitation is sometimes indulged in by third parties, who draw profit from child labour without paying fair wages, or by the parents, who make their children do work which is exhausting from the point of view of frequency, intensity and duration. If such practices are to be condemned, one must also make sure that the child is not left to its own devices but made to participate in some form of work so that it does not become an egotist or juvenile delinquent.

Political violence

The participants noted the political violence to which the African child is directly or indirectly exposed through the fault of adults. The transition which African society is going through calls for lucidity and vigilance so as, on the one hand, to combat the ancient and the new aggressions against the child and, on the other, to arm oneself with methods and means of protection and education developed and applied in keeping with ancestral cultural values.

It is precisely because of the need for such lucidity and vigilance that the Symposium began its work with a diagnosis of the situation before going on to examine the rights of the child and recommending strategies, policies and programmes for the protection of children.

The rights of the African child

These rights fall within the general framework of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1959 but also within the specific socio-economic context of Africa which lays stress on certain rights linked to vital needs. Amongst these, the Symposium gave special attention to the following:

The right to life

Even though wanted and awaited, the African child does not always survive the onslaughts of poverty, ignorance and violence. In a continent where undernourishment, if not famine, is taking root, mothers and families are not always in a position to ensure breast-feeding and provide the regular and balanced meals necessary for the physical and mental growth of their children. Frequent and almost uninterrupted child-bearing, an unhealthy and insanitary environment, bottle-feeding and abrupt weaning are among the factors which deprive far too many children of the elementary right to life and physical well-being. Handicapped children and children regarded as illegitimate have also the right to live a full life.

The right to pre-school education

Human life is not just material existence. It is also, and above all, intellectual, moral, spiritual and social. That is why the Symposium underlined the need for pre-school education both in the family circle and in socio-educational institutions conceived for this purpose.

In the family circle, the emotional and intellectual upbringing, just as nutritional and health care, should not be the sole responsibility of the mothers and of the womenfolk. The physical and mental equilibrium and development of the child require that the father and the menfolk participate in this task.

The socio-educational institutions should provide children with the health and safety conditions, the facilities for play, work and rest, which are indispensable for their psychosomatic development.

In this regard, the Symposium placed great emphasis on medical care and the need for qualified teaching staff in the crèches, day nurseries and kindergartens. It also stressed the need to promote the emotional and cultural development of the children in an African context, including local toys, songs, tales and legends, and the utilisation of their mother tongue.

The right to education

A son of Africa, Dr. Busia, has said that education is what transforms an individual into a person.

If this is so, education should begin, as we have seen, from tender age and continue throughout life.

This is surely the reason why African States make such efforts and sacrifices for the education of their citizens. These efforts relate, first of all, to primary education. Despite the growth in the national educational budgets, one sometimes notes a decline in the rates of school attendance in some countries as a result of population growth. Africa should face the facts and recognise that free compulsory primary schooling cannot be achieved overnight. However, many African countries, such as Nigeria, are determined to ensure free, universal and compulsory primary education by a date not too removed from the 1980 deadline which had been set by the first African Conference of Ministers of National Education at Addis Ababa.

The absence of reliable demographic data for educational planning leads to a surprise, as happened in Nigeria, where, following the decision to generalise primary education, the authorities found themselves faced with the need to provide schooling for 11 million children of school-going age, instead of the estimated 8 million, that is, to provide for 3 million additional applicants for admission for whom neither the premises, nor the equipment, nor the teachers had been foreseen.

The right to vocational training

Even if it were dispensed to all, from the primary school stage to the university level, education could never be an end in itself. It is a means, an instrument to prepare the child to look after himself or herself and become a useful member of society.

The Symposium showed that the economic profitability of expenditure on education is not sought in a systematic and coherent manner due to the inadequacies of the vocational training structures and the fact that the educational systems in force leave little scope for vocational guidance and training linked with school programmes.

As regards vocational guidance, children are often the victims of the ignorance and/or ambition of their parents and of a school system whose programmes and methods do not sufficiently promote the acquisition of manual skill and scientific knowledge.

Conscious of the inability of schools to ensure, at the present juncture, basic and vocational education for all, the participants called attention to the scope offered by non-formal, permanent education which has so far been insufficiently developed in African countries. Yet is it this type of education that could help children and adults who are not able to attend schools to emerge from their state of illiteracy. Again it is such informal education that could provide vocational training for those who have never been to school, facilitate their entry into the labour force and ensure their vertical as well as horizontal occupational mobility.

The right to work and to employment

This right, which can also be looked upon as a constraint because of the arduous nature too often attributed to work, is a fundamental one as it is an essential element in the development, the autonomy, the freedom and the dignity of the individual. But in order that this should be so, the conditions under which work is performed and remunerated must be fair and just.

Now, the prospects for work and employment of African children are characterised by lack of vocational training, low wages, scant promotion opportunities, unemployment and underemployment. These are some of the factors which lead the young to abandon their villages for the towns where they swell the ranks of a marginalised manpower reserve, living on the borders of social uselessness and delinquency.

The right to freedom and dignity

As it has done with respect to political violence, the Symposium stressed the factors which, contrary to Principle 10 of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, expose African children to practices which can encourage social, religious and other forms of discrimination. The inroads on the security of African countries, on their freedom to organise themselves politically, economically and culturally, deprive the people, including the children, of the right to be themselves, without being discriminated against and despised. Unequal access to the means of information and the practices relating to the recognition of diplomas are significant illustrations.

The review of the situation of the child in the light of its declared rights, which are frequently beyond reach or trampled underfoot, led the Symposium to probe the deep-seated reasons for this state of affairs and to seek to identify the ways and means to reduce the gap between the living reality and the pious intentions.

The right of a disabled child to special attention

The Symposium was informed of the Resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly proclaiming 1981 as the "International Year of Disabled Persons".

In the course of the discussion on the world of work and the protection of the child, it was recognised that it was necessary to provide protection for maladjusted and handicapped children taking into account their specific needs.

In keeping with the general theme of the International Year of Disabled Persons, namely "Full participation and equality", it is necessary to arouse not just pity but full consciousness, on the part of the governments and the public, that handicapped children have a right not only to education, medical care and general protection but also, and above all, of vocational training in the very interests of the communities to which they belong.

The observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons should be the occasion for the African continent to study in depth the problems created by the non-inclusion of the specific needs of maladjusted children in national planning policies.

Clear statistical data should make it possible to envisage co-ordinated action on the national, regional and international plane, both by the public authorities and by non-governmental organisations.

The Symposium supports the plan of action recently adopted by the General Assembly as well as the long-term programme for prevention, rehabilitation, assistance and technical co-operation in favour of disabled persons.

Developing strategies and coherent policies for child protection programmes

This important aspect of the work of the Symposium gave rise to heated debate and to numerous suggestions difficult to cover adequately within the scope of this report.

In the main, the Symposium was repeatedly called upon to recognise that the child is but one element in the family cell which in turn is a component of the national and international community. As a result, its problems cannot be dealt with in isolation from those of its parents or without taking into account the relations between individuals within the national and between the country and the rest of the world.

It thus became apparent that the strategy that might best accelerate the solution of the problems involved bore a close resemblance to the strategy involving the satisfaction of the basic needs of the greatest number, namely, food for all, health and basic education, full employment and better working conditions. Such a strategy implied giving a new orientation to development efforts which are at present limited to growth, and very limited growth at that, for the benefit of outside economic forces and a minority of the African population.

The objectives so assigned and the strategy described above can only be translated into action through a policy of self-reliance and self-sufficiency within the framework of community development and the fullest utilisation of popular initiative and creativity.

From this starting point, programmes aimed at ensuring the physical and mental health, the intellectual development, vocational training and preparation for employment of children and young persons should be formulated and taken into account in the preparation of national development plans. Provision should be made for their financing, preferably and to the extent possible, through the national budgets. Programmes in favour of children stem naturally from their specific needs and rights. The Symposium suggested some specific programmes which are listed below:

Information and education of the parents and the general public

The violations of the rights of the child in Africa stem, in part, from ignorance and from the survival of outmoded beliefs and superstitions. This is notably the case with the abandonment of twins and albinos, malnutrition, corporal punishment, excision and the exploitation of child labour.

To ensure that children grow in a climate of love, security and understanding conducive to their full development, the parents, the children themselves and society as a whole should be educated and trained in regard to their changing relationships. Education in family life is necessary today.

Protection of mother and child

The high rates of morbidity and mortality in child birth call for a programme of primary medical care based on pre- and postnatal examinations, vaccinations, provision of potable water and a varied and balanced diet with locally produced food, sanitary housing, arrangements for the disposal of solid and liquid waste and measures to fight the vectors of communicable diseases.

Family planning, taking into account the cultural values of Africa and the freedom of decision of the parents, together with research with a view to producing on an industrial scale and with local ingredients, inexpensive and acceptable weaning foods, are important factors in the protection of mother and child.

The socio-educational institutions

As a result of urbanisation and changes in the family structures, mothers and African families are increasingly confronted with the problem of the care and upbringing of young children, and particularly babies.

Children are frequently entrusted to the care of persons, adult or young, having little knowledge about how to look after the health and the development of the child. Despite these drawbacks, this is the formula which most African women prefer or practise.

Women who work for a wage or are self-employed, whether in urban or rural areas, need crèches, day nurseries or kindergartens either near their homes or near the workplace. In the latter event, the children are not too separated from their mothers who can continue to breast-feed them, but they are subjected to long journeys in noisy and insanitary conditions prejudicial to their health. In order not to increase the dependence of workers on their employers, it is necessary that employers should be made to contribute to the setting up of day nurseries and kindergarten schools, on the basis of a certain percentage of the wages or profits to be fixed by legislation and by collective agreements.

Independent women workers, such as stall-keepers, seamstresses, hairdressers, etc., often take their children along with them. Unfortunately, they have to concentrate on their lucrative activities to the detriment of the care and feeding of their children. The latter are exposed to various dangers and do not get the food they need. Hence it is necessary that development plans should include provisions for social welfare facilities such as day nurseries, kindergarten schools and canteens. A proportion of the funds of associations of women hawkers or other self-employed women could also be invested in such facilities.

As regards rural women, they should be encouraged to organise day-nurseries and kindergartens as the peasant women of Casamance, in Senegal, have done. They would be assisted in this by the community development efforts which would place at their disposal the necessary local resources, such as land, building materials, and the labour of men and adolescents in construction work. Teachers should be recruited and trained on the spot so as to be better able to serve rural populations.

These types of initiatives should also be encouraged in urban areas, as is the case in Mali; there, women have created neighbourhood kindergarten schools thus eliminating the problem of having to transport children and creating employment for the women and girls of the neighbourhood.

Considering the importance of the psychosomatic development of young children, the public authorities, particularly the Ministries of Health, Social Affairs, Education and Labour, should assist the socio-educational pre-school institutions in:

- pedagogical and health training for supervisory staff;
- medical inspection and health care (dental care, eyesight tests, vaccination, balanced diet, hygiene and sanitation);
- the preparation of suitable educational programmes and materials.

In the absence of an expanded family and due to the urgent need to supplement family income and contribute to national development, African women are faced with the worrying problem of the care and education of their children. They have the right to be relieved of this anguish so as to reconcile their double role of workers and mothers. In this context, the Symposium discussed the duration and distribution of maternity leave. The duration of such leave is generally of 12 weeks in English-speaking African countries and of 14 weeks in French-speaking countries. There would be advantage in raising its duration from 12 to 14 weeks in keeping with international legislation and it should be so spread as to enable the mother to remain as long as possible with her new-born child. Thus, in the Cameroon, the 14 weeks are broken down into two periods, 4 weeks before and 10 weeks after the birth of the child.

Educational reform

References to the urgent need for such reform recurred lie a leitmotiv in the Symposium discussions.

Such reform should, in general, eliminate the watertight division between school and working life and between the school system and arrangements for extra-mural training.

With a view to correcting certain serious shortcomings, the Symposium considered that basic education should be free and compulsory, that it should be dispensed by primary schools or by other institutions such as functional literacy, workers' education and community development centres.

Basic education programmes should comprise, in addition to reading, writing and arithmetic, familiarisation with a certain number of scientific and technical concepts to enable the students to understand the world in which they live and to use and maintain adequately the equipment introduced into even the most remote villages (lamps, radios, bicycles, motor cycles, etc.).

The techniques of agricultural production, carpentry, masonry and artistic handicrafts should also be covered.

This is why the reform of education should go hand in hand with the creation of vegetable gardens and training workshops to introduce the child to the realities of life and technology.

Educational guidance and vocational training

In order to solve the problem of bottlenecks between the various levels of the school system and also in order to provide some training to those who do not have access to formal education, the Symposium stressed the need to set up vocational guidance and training services adequately equipped, quantitatively and qualitatively, with teaching materials and staff.

The indispensable co-operation between the families, the schools, and the competent organs and services at the national level (ministries of education, labour, planning; associations of parents; and employers' and workers' organisations) should be strengthened and supported with the help of international organisations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, the ILO and the FAO.

Vocational training should be resolutely oriented towards fields where the shortage of supervisory staff, technicians and skilled workers is most acutely felt, such as: mining research and operations, hydrology, petrochemistry, transportation and telecommunications, and technology applied to rural work and domestic appliances.

From this point of view, both handicapped and exceptionally talented children have the right to special treatment in keeping with their physical and intellectual capacities.

The structuring of the employment market and the protection of the young worker

Children being only one element in the manpower reserve, their access to employment and their protection in the working world depends on knowledge of employment opportunities and the capacity of the public authorities to regulate the flow of workers into and from the labour market.

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The Symposium paid particular attention to the connection between the legislative provisions and the economic and social factors which underlie child labour.

The exploitation of child labour always occurs in situations characterised by the existence of an abundant, illiterate and unskilled manpower inevitably exposed to low wages, unemployment and underemployment.

The degree of technical know-how demanded by the economy of any given society necessarily determines the utilisation of the labour of children and young workers, because such labour becomes uneconomic when the rhythm of work and skills required increase at the expense of the duration of work.

When the social image of the child is seriously out of focus with the realities, child labour becomes intolerable, whence the responsibility of intellectuals, workers' organisations and others to orchestrate information and sensitisation campaigns with a view to obtaining the enactment of adequate legislation.

Legislation relating to child labour and the civil and penal codes

The proceedings of the Symposium brought out the fact that the majority of African States dispose of legislation capable of protecting children. It must be recognised, however, that the protection of children in the world of work is not a question of good intentions and goodwill. It depends on the power relationships between the public authorities, the employers and the organisations which defend the interests of the workers.

These power relationships are determined, in particular, by the choice of society and by the national development plans.

Thus, in certain cash crop plantations, the authorisation to recruit children (below the minimum age for admission to employment) refused by the labour inspector, is granted by the families themselves.

The strengthening of the labour inspection services should go hand in hand with programmes for the promotion of self-employment and rural development with a view to adjusting the manpower supply to the demands of the labour market.

The participants were unanimous in considering that the exploitation of children should be regarded and punished as a crime and not just as a simple infringement of the law. African penal codes lay down penalties for non-assistance to persons in danger, assault and battery, unlawful exercise of medicine and abduction of minors. These legal provisions could be realistically applied to abandonment and neglect, bodily harm, rape and prostitution of the young.

Such coercive measures should, in the opinion of the Symposium, be accompanied by sensitisation and educational campaigns.

The role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

Policies and programmes in favour of children should not be the sole responsibility of governments. Considering the limited public funds available, the Symposium was of the opinion that where internal security is not in danger, the initiative and goodwill of the NGOs should be encouraged and largely utilised within the framework of economic and social development plans.

NGOs were defined by the Symposium as being non-profit making organisations, not dependent on any government, autonomous as regards finance and management of their affairs, which participate in the development of the country at any level. Taken in this sense, religious, women's and youth organisations as well as organisations of employers and workers should participate in programmes for the protection of the child through action in the following fields:

(a) action to inform and arouse public opinion. Sensitisation campaigns through conferences and the mass media (radio, television, books, posters, songs, etc.) constitute effective means for making the relevant legislation better known and better applied and calling attention to the penalties for abuses and violence against children. Such campaigns are required for the fight against excision, prostitution, exploitation and for the promotion of family education in sexual, moral and civic matters. Campaigns to change attitudes are important as all action is born from an idea. It is in the hearts of men that not only wars are born but also the inventions and the actions that can save humanity;

(b) provision of vocational guidance and training facilities for rural and urban youth, including handicapped children in the orphanages, and in the reception and rehabilitation centres;

(c) action as a pressure group.

The NGOs can watch over the conformity of existing legislation with international standards, call attention to breaches of law, and suggest measures for the protection of children in the informal urban sector and young unpaid workers in family undertakings.

The Symposium was of the opinion that in order to strengthen their action, NGOs should plan and co-ordinate their efforts through local, national, regional and international committees.

Conclusion

The problems of the child, and particularly of the young worker, of his education and his protection against abuse and violence of all kinds, are particularly complex and difficult.

Their solution is linked with the solution of those of the family and of society as a whole. It calls for political will and courage on the part of governments, collaboration from non-governmental organisations and, finally, for a new economic order based on urgent attention to the basic needs of the peoples, a policy of full employment and fair prices for raw materials.

Pending the ushering in of this new era, the Symposium made a number of recommendations, some of which include guidance with regard to the research and action to be undertaken by the International Institute for Labour Studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Access to work and employment protection

In order to facilitate the access of African children to work and employment and ensure adequate protection for them, the Symposium recommends:

1.1: In-depth studies on the role of children in the economies of African countries and on their conditions of work.

1.2: Closer supervision of child labour with a view to identifying the sectors in which they work without legal protection and to applying more strictly the legislation in force, in particular Convention No. 138 and its accompanying Recommendation.

1.3: Strengthening the human and material resources and the decentralisation of labour inspection services.

1.4: The setting up of vocational guidance and vocational training structures, manned by qualified specialists and disposing of the required equipment.

1.5: Better co-ordination between parents, competent technical services, and workers' and employers' organisations on the question of vocational training and guidance.

1.6: Sustained efforts to collect reliable statistical data indispensable for the proper planning of education and training.

1.7: The introduction of free, compulsory and universal primary education by a deadline as close as possible to the target date of 1980 fixed by the Ministers of National Education at Addis Ababa in 1961.

1.8: Reform of the educational system to bring the school closer to the other training institutions, to include elements of vocational training within the school programmes and provide for this purpose the required installations, equipment and special staff, and revise teaching methods so as to adapt educational activities to the needs of the beneficiaries.

1.9: Creation and development of permanent education facilities so as to promote on-the-job training of workers and enhance their occupational mobility, both vertical and horizontal.

1.10: Dissemination of the work of inter-African and other organs in the field of the development of educational programmes and materials, of child and adult psychology applied to education, vocational guidance and vocational training. The efforts made by UNESCO in this field in liaison with certain institutions such as the Institute of Education of Kenya, the Central African Programme Development Centre of Ibadan, and the African Science Teaching Programme in Accra, should be strengthened.

1.11: The development of special programmes for handicapped or exceptionally talented children with a view to the best possible utilisation of their physical and intellectual capacities.

2. Protection of children whose parents work outside the home

Taking into account the right of women to seek employment and participate in national development, it is necessary to:

2.1: Establish crèches, day nurseries and kindergartens in the areas of residence or near the place of work.

2.2: Encourage the NGOs (religious, women's, workers' and employers' and other associations, municipalities, etc.) to create such institutions within the framework of a policy of granting tax exemptions to large enterprises which establish and run such socio-educational structures.

2.3: Provide to such socio-educational institutions all necessary assistance for the pedagogical and health training of their teaching staff and for the medical care of children, through the Ministries of National Education, Public Health, Labour and Social Affairs. Particular attention should be paid to the needs of the poorest classes.

2.4: Encourage the use of national languages, the production and utilisation of educational materials and toys produced with local materials by local artisans.

2.5: Encourage parents to contribute to their children's cultural awakening through songs, tales and legends, and to their children's proper nutrition through helping in the preparation of meals served in the canteen.

3. Protection of children from abuse and violence

Although, at first sight, African society seems "sweet and warm" towards the child, it contains abuses and violence. The Symposium recommends that:

3.1: Such abuses and violence be fought against with tact and prudence to avoid tilting at windmills and bring about narcissistic blockages. It is essential to ensure the participation of the populations concerned, and particularly of women, in such efforts.

3.2: Campaigns of information, sensitisation and training should be organised through all the educational structures (mass media, NGOs, school programmes) on the grave dangers involved in such practices as the abandonment of children, excision and scarification, excessive corporal punishment, child marriages and juvenile prostitution. Advantage should be taken of the Decade of Women to make appreciable progress in combating such practices as excision.

3.3: Policies of full employment and fair distribution of national income should be applied so that parents might look after the needs of their children without having to make them work.

3.4: Legal measures should be taken regarding the status of illegitimate children, adopted children and orphans.

3.5: The minimum age of marriage should be fixed at 17 and unmarried mothers should be authorised to pursue their studies.

3.6: The exploitation of children, in any manner, should be punished as a crime and not as a simple offence.

3.7: Control should be exercised over mass media which present unsuitable behavioural patterns to the young.

Votes of thanks and general recommendations

1. The Symposium thanks the ILO and the International Institute for Labour Studies for having organised this meeting which contributed to throwing new light on the problems of the African child in the world of work and on its protection against violence and abuses.

2. It thanks the OAU, UNDP, the Governments of Norway and the Netherlands for their interest and support in the organisation of the Symposium.

3. It recommends the proclamation of a Decade of the Child and the mobilisation of the required financial resources for the implementation of policies and programmes evolved during the IYC.

4. It requests the IILS to:

- give the widest possible dissemination to the work of the Symposium among international, governmental and non-governmental organisations particularly in Africa (OAU, OCAM, ECOWAS, the Conferences of the different Ministries of Labour, Education, Youth and Sports, etc.);
- organise, as a follow-up to the Symposium, working meetings at the level of the States, preceded by appropriate questionnaires, with a view to the formulation of national policies and strategies;
- carry out the following programme of study and research.

Programme of studies and research for the IILS

The proceedings of the Yaoundé Symposium having brought out the lack of reliable data for the elaboration of programmes and policies for the education, training and protection of the child, the Symposium recommends that the IILS should carry out studies and research in the following fields:

1. The factors underlying child labour, the role of such labour in African economies, the sectors of activity involved, training and employment opportunities.
2. Training and the structure of employment in Africa, the appropriate policies for regulating the flow of manpower to and from the employment markets.

3. The relationship between the juridical position, the economic and social processes and child labour.

4. Types of employment not yet covered by national legislation, the conditions under which such work is carried out and the protective measures required.

5. The educational and vocational training facilities in existence or required to be created in Africa in favour of handicapped children.

6. Traditional methods of educating and bringing up children as members of society, the problems of the family and child labour in Africa.

7. The setting up of a clearinghouse for information of excision, the evaluation of attitudes with regard to this practice and the best approaches for its elimination.

CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE SYMPOSIUM

Several prominent members of the Governing Body of the ILO spoke at the closing ceremony, which was presided over by Mr. A.C. Tandau, Secretary-General of the Union of Tanzania Workers.

The first speaker was Mr. Georget, Employers' representative on the Governing Body of the ILO, who stated that he was convinced that the International Institute for Labour Studies had become an instrument for the development of member countries, particularly those in Africa. While stressing that it was pointless to train workers if there were no job opportunities to match their training, he expressed satisfaction at the fact that this problem, closely linked with the establishment of a new world economic order, had been examined in depth by the Symposium.

Mr. Issifu, Workers' representative on the Governing Body of the ILO, joined Mr. Georget in thanking the Cameroonian Government. In his opinion, care had to be exercised in speaking of the part played by non-governmental organisations as "pressure groups". That term should not be construed to imply a conflict, when it was a question of informing and making governments aware and convinced of the need to take certain measures. Protection of the child, as he saw it, was tantamount to protection of the human race since "the child is father of the man". He appealed to all men, lastly, to remember the warmth surrounding their childhood and thus bear in mind the usefulness of maternity leaves and the need to face up to their responsibilities as fathers.

Mr. Mengot, representing the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Africa, pointed out that, because of the continent's great diversity, educational problems in the Saharan countries and those in tropical Africa called for different approaches. He drew the participants' attention to a number of programmes being carried out by his organisation along the lines mapped out by the Symposium, including regional seminars on the participation of rural women in development, basic education in West Africa and special education for the physically and mentally handicapped. The fact that the fifth Conference of the African Ministers of Education in 1983 would be devoted to pre-school care and education showed the importance that was being attached to children under school age.

In concluding, the representative of UNESCO launched an urgent appeal to UNDP, and to the Regional Director for Africa, Mr. Doo Kingué, in particular, that funds be found for training African teaching staff.

Mr. Missé, Director of Labour, closed the ceremony by expressing pride in the level of the proceedings, which would be reported to the Board of the IILS at its next session so that they could serve as a basis for its research programme. It was a source of satisfaction for the United Republic of Cameroon to have been able to host the Symposium. He wished the participants a safe journey home.

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